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MEMOIR

OF

HENRY COMPTON

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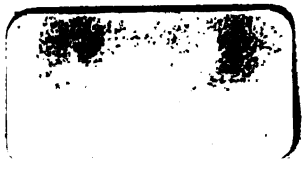

MEMOIR OF HENRY COMPTON.

Photographed by Elliott and Fry.

WOODBURYTYPE.

HENRY COMPTON.

MEMOIR

OF

HENRY COMPTON.

EDITED BY

CHARLES AND EDWARD COMPTON.

WITH ANECDOTES AND PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF THE EMINENT COMEDIAN BY

Mrs. W. H. Kendal (Miss Madge Robertson), Messrs. E. L. Blanchard, F. C. Burnand, Henry J. Byron, R. Brudenell Carter, W. Chippendale, Henry Howe, Henry Irving, Charles Mathews, J. R. Planché, Tom Taylor, J. L. Toole, and Hermann Vezin.

London:
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1879.

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210. n. 155.

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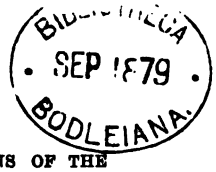

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210. n. 158.

CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS,
CRYSTAL PALACE PRESS.

PREFACE.

THIS brief memoir of Mr. Compton has been written in response to the wishes expressed by his professional brethren, as well as by his private friends.

If the former find their recollection of their fellow-actor quickened, and the latter are able to recall more distinctly the valued friend, our exertions will not have been fruitless.

We have here to acknowledge, too briefly, the assistance which has been readily afforded us by many friends; to Mr. Brudenell Carter, who has cheerfully given his time and his counsel, we are so much indebted that gratitude compels us to state an obligation we cannot hope to requite.

The frequent recurrence of the words "my father" is due to each of us having written the parts he was best acquainted with.

THE EDITORS.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

Parentage—His Brothers—Early Boyhood and Schooldays—Life at Huntingdon and Godmanchester—Natural Talent for Mimicry 1

CHAPTER II.

Business Life in London—Restlessness—Sees Mathews—Liston—Beginning of Theatrical Tastes—Amateur Entertainment—Decides for the Stage 17

CHAPTER III.

The Novitiate—Early Country Practice—His Progress and Popularity—Speeches and Presentations—A Country Actor's Life—An Offer for London 35

CHAPTER IV.

Début in London—His Success—Principal Parts—Drury Lane—Macready—Leaves London 70

CHAPTER V.

PAGE

Private Life—Recreation—Bodily Exercises—Variety of Tastes—Mental Recreation—Love of Reading—Professional and General Reading—London Friends—Habit of Observation 105

CHAPTER VI.

Liverpool—Dublin—At the Princess's and Olympic—The Strand—His Marriage—Removal to Kensington—Haymarket Engagements 152

CHAPTER VII.

Married Life at Charing Cross—Later Reading—Dickens—Brontë and Thackeray—Intimacy with Dickens—Anecdote of Thackeray 187

CHAPTER VIII.

Continuance of Haymarket Engagement—Leaves the Haymarket—The Globe and Lyceum Engagements—Family Life at Kensington—The End 204

CHAPTER IX.

Letters 249

MEMOIR OF HENRY COMPTON.

CHAPTER I.

Parentage—His Brothers—Early Boyhood and Schooldays—Life at Huntingdon and Godmanchester—Natural Talent for Mimicry.

'Tis said, "when a graced actor quits the scene,"
Of laurels all brief his have brightest sheen,
That of all memories, Time trusts to Fame,
His soonest shrinks to shadow of a name.
Not so; 'tis Time's self the denial gives,
If the charm dies the charmer's memory lives.

TOM TAYLOR.

"WHEN the present generation shall have passed away, and the sayings and doings of this age have become a matter of history, there are few men among the disciples of Thalia who will occupy a prouder position than Henry Compton. His fame will probably be greater fifty years hence than it is now. Talents such as he possessed cannot be forgotten immediately their possessor quits this mortal scene; and a reputation such as he has made for himself cannot easily

die. For nearly a quarter of a century he has ranked amongt the foremost of British comedians, and his popularity is in no way on the wane. The dry humour that he throws around whatever he attempts, and the drollery of his manner, are such as can never be forgotten when once seen; whilst the ease, grace, and finish of his acting adds very considerably to the effect he produces upon an audience. His style is quite gentlemanly and unobtrusive, but intensely comic, and his capability for making the most of a very small character is universally recognised. In some of the Shakespearean comedy parts he was almost unrivalled; and it is in these probably that his well-earned reputation will be rendered permanent. If, as Dr. Johnson thought, Shakespeare's comedies are better than his tragedies, or if, indeed, they are as good, then there can be no reason why the performer, to whose talents they owe their living embodiment upon the stage, should not hand his fame down to posterity side by side with that of great tragedians who have immortalised themselves by 'Hamlet,' 'Othello,' 'Macbeth,' or 'King Lear.' No man has a greater claim to do this than the subject of our sketch."

Thus wrote, about seventeen years since, a well-known dramatic critic, in a periodical called "The Players;" and his words, I think, form a fitting introduction to the present work.

Charles Mackenzie (who will be always best recollected by the name he had made famous—Henry Compton) was born on the 22nd day of March, 1805, and was in his seventy-third year at the time of his death. He was the sixth child of John and Elizabeth Mackenzie, of whose family of eleven children but three now survive.

His father was a man of considerable natural endowments, which had been supplemented by cultivation. He had an ardent love of books, a taste which most of his family, including Charles, inherited from him. Besides this, he was naturally eloquent and fond of argument, in which he was well versed. Unlike many good debaters, he was a charming conversationalist. My father has often spoken of the effect produced on the company by his happy manner, and the tact with which he utilised his varied reading.

His mother, whose maiden name was Symonds, possessed great personal and mental attractions. She was a native of Worcester, and through her

the Mackenzie family were connected with the Rowland Hill family of postal-reform celebrity. Her character had made a deep and enduring impression on my father. From the description he used to give of my grandmother, this only appears natural. Mrs. Mackenzie seems to have been one of the class of Englishwomen more especially associated with the early years of this century. She was at once imaginative and practical, refined and energetic, cultivated and yet a notable housewife; an adept in all the mysteries of the kitchen, but equally at home in society. She possessed to perfection the now almost extinct art of reading aloud, and my father has often said that he never met a better reader in private life. She was the fountain of authority and the active ruler in her family, on all the members of which the influence of her character was most marked.

For his sister Susannah, or Susette, my father always had the fondest affection, and he invariably spoke of her as combining, in a singular degree, high intellectual powers and warm affections. The following letter will give a much truer idea of their attachment than could be conveyed by description :

Cambridge, May 20th, 1842.

MY DEAREST CHARLES,

This skewer of a pen will just serve to tell you that we shall be delighted to see you at Cambridge as soon as you can find it convenient to come. As your engagements are up on the 23rd, we hope that next week will not pass without bringing us the long-expected pleasure of seeing you. My dear mother is quite willing to wait for you till after you have been to us; so make no more excuses, but come. Our walks are in their freshest, fullest beauty; it would be a shame in you to neglect this opportunity of enjoying them. Your nephews are overjoyed at the prospect of seeing you; the elder ones recollecting former pleasures in your society, the younger ones expecting to find in you every attribute that can render a being delightful and desirable.

My dear husband and the girls send kind love, and I am, as always,

Your truly affectionate Sister,

SUSETTE.

My Uncle Stephen was killed by a fall from his gig in November, 1851, and I have little or no

personal recollection of him. His portrait, which was painted by Ludovici in 1848, and is in the possession of his son, Dr. Morell Mackenzie, is that of a man of most striking personal appearance. It is not only that it generally represents the perfection of physical beauty at the middle period of life, but the massive development of the brow, and the sweetness and dignity of the expression, render it a picture which no one could pass by with only a single or a careless glance. The testimony of my uncle's friends is that this portrait was in no sense flattering; and that it did no more than justice to the original. The leaning of his mind was in the direction of the metaphysics of the Coleridgian school; and perhaps his greatest pleasure was to assemble two or three kindred spirits at his house at Leytonstone, and to discuss with them questions "which hover on the bounds of mortal ken." In the infancy of physiology, he was a physiologist of no mean order, and the keenness of his trained intellect was of the greatest service to many who were working in the direction of experiment, and whom he preserved from rushing hastily to premature conclusions. The late Dr. Marshall Hall was one of those who profited greatly

by his counsel, and whose first step in any scientific difficulty was to go to Leytonstone and to lay it all before Mackenzie. Those who knew both were wont to say, indeed, that Mackenzie was the real originator of Marshall Hall's most important discoveries; and that a visit to Leytonstone was the invariable precursor of one of these being given to the world. My uncle's acquaintance with literature was of the most extensive kind; and his literary taste was only too fastidious. He often wrote upon the subjects with which he was most familiar, but he never satisfied himself, and hence never preserved a page that he had written. He was formed to shine as the intellectual centre of an university or seat of learning; but it was his actual and most incongruous lot to be a medical practitioner in a London suburb, inhabited chiefly by City merchants, who felt instinctively that he was a man of superior order to themselves, but to whom his thoughts, and the language necessary for their expression, would have been about equally unintelligible. His constant professional association with the vulgar rich had led him to adopt, possibly as the easiest and best way of dealing with them, a curiously stern and impe-

rative manner, the effect of which was increased by a command of language that enabled him to say even the simplest things by some unexpected turn of phraseology; and this manner, which became habitual to him with patients or with slight acquaintances, gave an added charm to the tender affection which overflowed in his domestic circle, and to the cordial and gracious hospitality which he extended to his chosen friends. It might be said of him, indeed, in the words applied to one who filled a larger place in history:

> He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one;
> Exceeding wise, fair-spoken, and persuading:
> Lofty and sour to them that loved him not;
> But to those men that sought him, sweet as summer.

I have heard my mother say that, before she knew him well, she herself was somewhat in awe of him, and that she once said to my father, "I cannot help being a little bit afraid of Stephen, his manner is so imposing." "Yes," replied my father, laughing, "he is a great impostor." In truth, to those who had once seen the kindliness and geniality which lay beneath the cloak, the manner was ever afterwards insufficient to obscure them.

The brother who was next in age to my father was John Morell Mackenzie. His great attainments and his tragic death seem to warrant some account of him here.

In boyhood, Morell, as he was always called, was of a studious disposition, and though quiet, possessed a vein of quaint humour which he retained throughout his life. His love for reading and steady perseverance in acquiring knowledge while yet very young, caused his teachers and relatives to predict a brilliant future for him. In its most essential particular his early promise was fully maintained, though until he married a lady of fortune the worldly success which his friends anticipated was not his to any great extent. He enjoyed in after life those keen pleasures that belong to the cultured intellect and well-trained mind, and his was a character that could afford to take but little account of those more obtrusive signs of success that appeal so strongly to the mass of mankind.

He ultimately decided to join the ministry in the Independent body; and, after pursuing his studies at Glasgow College with distinguished success, and studying divinity at an English Independent

academy, he for several years was co-pastor of a church in Poole, Dorsetshire. He removed thence to Glasgow as successor to the Rev. Greville Ewing. After two years passed in this capacity he resigned his pastorate, in order to devote more time to the students at the Glasgow Independent Academy, where he was shortly after elected to the chair of Biblical Criticism and Church History, which important office he filled till his decease. His intellect was strong and clear, his learning varied and profound, his manner of communicating instruction remarkably felicitous, and his disposition almost irresistibly engaging. He remained in Glasgow several years, surrounded by a circle of attached friends, until he had to pay a visit in the summer of 1843 to his friends in England. Accordingly he took his passage in the steamer *Pegasus*. This ill-fated vessel, however, never reached her destination, for she struck upon a sunken rock called the Goldstone, situated about two miles and a half north of Holy Island, and only six out of more than fifty persons were saved. The steamer went down stern-foremost. After the first shock, all the passengers crowded to the after part, filling the quarterdeck. When all hope was

abandoned, we read that "The Rev. Morell Mackenzie addressed the passengers in a firm, collected tone, reminded them of their danger, and engaged in prayer. All present knelt around him, and he in the calmest manner commended their souls to God, in whose presence they were shortly to appear. In this befitting manner he was engaged, all beside him fervently and audibly joining in the supplications, when the vessel went down."

Among the passengers by the *Pegasus* was Mr. Elton, the well-known actor, who had been appearing the week previous at the Edinburgh Adelphi Theatre. His pleasant manner had made him a favourite with his fellow-actors, and his great talents had made him popular with playgoers. In these circumstances, Mr. Murray, the lessee, with his usual generosity, organised a benefit on behalf of his widow and family.

My father was born in the old town of Huntingdon. Situated, as this place is, in the midst of a farming population, it, like all of its class, has been less altered by the introduction of railways than the manufacturing towns. Still, the Huntingdon of to-day is widely different from the rural

town where Charles Mackenzie passed his boyhood. The vivid pictures of English country life of that period given by Miss Mitford, and in some of her earlier works by George Eliot, serve but to show how much in thought, feeling, and material conditions the young generation of to-day are separated from their forerunners of 1810. At that time Huntingdon was a quiet country town, where both life and business went lazily forward, where the occasional stage-coach was a day's excitement, and where the recurrence of the seasons seemed to form the chief subject for present discussion, past regret, and prospective prophecy. While speaking of Huntingdon, I may appropriately mention a little anecdote in which my eldest sister was concerned. Miss Compton while at school was *facile princeps* in English history. One day the history class was singularly dull. Question after question produced either anxious perplexity or reckless "shots." The query, "What celebrated persons were born at Huntingdon?" passed like its predecessors; so the schoolmistress, feeling sure of her "history" pupil, turned to Miss Compton, saying, "Now, Miss Compton, you are not going to fail me,

I hope? What celebrated persons were born at Huntingdon?" The answer came readily: "Oliver Cromwell, and"—a pause—"*my* papa."

My grandmother at one period kept a boarding-school for young ladies, which for some time was very successful; but an ill-advised change to a larger house resulted in the ultimate breaking-up of the school. My grandfather also became a schoolmaster when at Godmanchester, where Charles and the rest of the family lived for some time.

As a boy, my father was good-natured and high-spirited. He had in a great degree the youthful love for mischief which may be generally put down as the mark of an exuberant nature scorning the trammels of adult authority. His unvarying good-humour made him a favourite both in his family and with their friends. His education was begun in Huntingdon, and finished at a boarding-school at Little Baddon, in Essex. Like many others distinguished in after-life, and also like a larger number of no distinction, his school success was not above the average. The hereditary taste for reading, which is one of the most constant of the family traits, did not develop in him until some years later.

This period of his boyhood, his country life and school adventures, are most familiarly known to all his children. It was his custom, in response to a demand for "a story," to tell his children the "story" of his boyhood. For them this story had a double charm; not only was it a record of what "papa" had been and done when a boy, but, besides, it took place in that El Dorado of town children, "the country;" not any place where people went in the summer, but *real* country, where there were people called Farmer So-and-So, and Lawyer This; where the mysterious operation of milking the cow took place, and where, chief of its attractions, the syllabub—of which such tantalising accounts were given—was made.

How familiar his minute and vivid narration had made us with the pet donkey, by name "Neddy!" How eagerly we compared the "moke" of the London streets to the paragon of the country, always to find on appeal that the former "was nothing like so lovely as Neddy!" Lovely was the adjective specially reserved for this ideal creature.

Then, again, how strongly did he impress us by his account of the death of a schoolmate; how much were we affected by the story of the Huntingdon

gentleman who was drowned during a very long frost, and whose body was not recovered till the ice thawed. If he perceived this pathetic recital to be too much for the more emotional part of his audience, he would change the subject and cheer us by an animated description of the annual nutting outing, one of the most popular of autumnal recreations; or he would excite the youthful palate by recounting how the apples and pears were gathered in the orchard behind the "old house at Huntingdon," not omitting the incident of the broken ladder, which was followed by a broken leg. This naturally led to an account of the sufferer, who was a "character," a lame soldier, whom my father's maturer judgment pronounced to be a "do." Then we would be told of how our grandfather used to talk to the French prisoners confined in the county gaol. These stories, besides others of a like kind, were of course highly popular with his little circle, and repetition but gave another charm to them. Altogether my father succeeded in giving us very true and real ideas of his country boyhood, none the less valuable from our being unable to give a definite account of it in words to our schoolboy friends.

My father had early displayed a talent for mimicry, by which he had afforded much amusement to himself and his friends, and, as is usual, some disgust to the originals whom he imitated so faithfully. This power of facial expression and contortion he possessed to a great degree throughout his life. On one occasion, when he was very young, a doctor, who was a friend of the family, called to see Mrs. Mackenzie. This gentleman was elderly and eccentric, and offered a fine scope for elaborate imitation; the opportunity was too excellent a one to be missed, and my father accordingly proceeded to mimic in the most amusing manner the doctor's peculiarities, much to the dismay and discomfort of my grandmother, who was opposite to him, and could scarcely refrain from laughing in her visitor's face.

CHAPTER II.

Business Life in London—Restlessness—Sees Mathews—Liston—Beginning of Theatrical Tastes—Amateur Entertainment—Decides for the Stage.

THE period now arrived in my father's life when his future career had to be in a measure decided upon, and though probably by no means in the manner most in accordance with his tastes, if indeed at that age he had exhibited any particular predilections, it was decided to accept the offer of his mother's brother, Mr. Symonds, and to place him under that gentleman's care and guardianship.

Mr. Symonds was in business as a Western cloth merchant in Aldermanbury, London, and was willing and anxious to receive his nephew, and to afford him all the advantages that he would have given to his own son. Thus the youth was transferred from his quiet country home to the great metropolis, and his future career as a man of business appeared to be settled.

It was to all appearances about the most unpromising beginning that could be imagined for the embryo actor, who was destined by fate to so brilliant and honourable a career.

Mr. Symonds was born, in common with Charles Mackenzie's mother, of one of the good old and now pretty well worn-out and strictly-religious and, to use an exploded epithet, puritanical families.

Saintly and tender almost to a fault, Charles Mackenzie's uncle had been trained in a severe school. And though his nephew was exceedingly dear to him, and though in after years he delighted in his triumphs, and looked upon him as a son, yet he was about the last man to have allowed his young ward the slightest opportunity or encouragement to develop his latent genius for the stage. Charles was treated by his uncle and his uncle's sweet and womanly wife with a kindness of which he often spoke in after years. But to say truth, his conduct was somewhat discouraging and trying to his excellent relatives.

Accounts were, to the uncongenial brains of the future hero of a hundred triumphs, a toil and vexation not to be endured. And, as his worthy uncle would often observe in after years: "Why, the

boy had not memory to know that two and two made four, and yet he could learn several hundred lines without any trouble where he had the necessity!"

It was, however, easily accounted for as time rolled on. His genius was so strong in one direction that it was like bending a tree to attempt training it in another. And it was perhaps the very strongest proof that could be given of the brilliant career that awaited him when he—as yet all unconscious of his own powers—was so utterly averse to any more easy but commonplace instruction in another and straightforward path.

Never could he have been placed in a more uncongenial atmosphere for the cultivation of his gifts. The very name of an actor, the very door of a theatre, were equally unknown to his worthy relatives. Besides which domestic and immediate contact, he was surrounded by others of his family whose ideas were of the same stamp, and their positions such as to give them both weight and influence with their young relative. There was a brother-in-law of his mother, of whom he used to say in after years that one of his greatest triumphs was that this uncle

and another brother of his mother's were induced to waive their scruples and come within the forbidden walls of a theatre to see him act; and also the uncle and guardian of his mother, Mr. Addington, an eminent London physician and distinguished literary man, but a man so stern and decided, that Charles said, in one of his pointed, epigrammatic speeches, "You don't know when you've got him, and when you've got him you don't know what to do with him."

These gentlemen, with a circle of friends and connections around them, naturally strengthened the home-teaching and training of Mr. Symonds's household as to the path in which their ward should walk. But happily for the lovers of classic comedy, for the devotees of Shakespeare, and the true supporters of what Mr. Mackenzie himself said "is an art, and a noble art too," all was powerless to bind the irrepressible bent that only genius really feels, and only genius justifies in its indulgence.

But still months and years went on. Charles managed to win the interest and regard of his relatives to a degree that nothing could shake. To his tiny cousins he was a perfect idol. His kindness,

his joyous fun, and winning fascinations won their infant hearts. And the future father of a large and most loving family perhaps found, in his uncle's household, the atmosphere that cherished his gracious love and sympathy for children. But he was not happy. His spirit chafed under the steady yoke of daily work, the long hours that were then so much more the rule than in more liberal and modern days, and most probably also in the quiet unexciting evenings that succeeded to the day's employment.

But still he might have gone moodily and patiently on, earned his necessary income by the distasteful monotony of a warehouse, and died "a mute, inglorious actor," had not a casual and most singular incident occurred to quicken the seeds that were lying fallow in the young man's heart.

Perhaps Mr. Symonds compassionated the dull monotony of his nephew's life, or else his own secret sympathy with genuine humour had some share in the infringement of his usual rules. In any case he did "stretch a point," to use a common expression, on the occasion to which may perhaps be dated the crisis in my father's life. Liston, that prince of broad comedians of that peculiar school, was then

in his zenith. He was giving those entertainments that have probably never been excelled, though more than once imitated; and the peculiarity of his style tempted Mr. Symonds, besides many others, to forego his prejudice against the usual run of theatres, and to go, accompanied by his delighted nephew, to hear the laugh-inspiring man.

It was "Paul Pry," that piece which can never be appreciated in modern days, because it depended so entirely on the actor's personality. At that date it was new and unequalled in its speciality; and to Charles Mackenzie's congenial spirit it was simply entrancing. His whole brain was caught and bent on the novel scene. For days and weeks afterwards he would rehearse the performance. Umbrella in hand, he would stride up and down the impromptu stage of his uncle's modest sitting-room; and, if the report of his relatives may be trusted, with no mean imitation of his droll and accomplished model.

Whether it was only the match to the powder cannot be actually decided, but his uncle would often say, with a grave shake of his head in after days: "Ah, I often reproached myself with having taken the lad to that place. It led him off in the wrong

direction. It turned his head, poor boy." But no doubt it was only the last straw on the camel's back—the sunshine on his winter of discontent. Not long after this episode he was missing from his uncle's house, but after a brief though terribly anxious search he was discovered, brought back, forgiven, and reinstated in his old place.

Again, after an interval, the same restless spirit prompted his escape, and again his uncle with paternal anxiety sought him, and on this occasion thought it prudent to take a rather different course with the truant. He placed him with another and most respectable firm of his acquaintance, with the idea that a change of scene and occupation would quell the restless spirit in the young man's breast, and open to him a new interest and prospect. It was in vain. Charles could not control his wandering yearnings for the art he then so admired and afterwards so adorned. His duties were forgotten. On one occasion an important packet of letters entrusted to him for the post were, to his great surprise, found lying in his desk on the morning when they should have reached their destination.

A cardinal crime this, in the eye of methodical

and rigid men of business; and the "Bailie Nicol Jarvie," whom he afterwards so vividly impersonated, could not have been more scandalised by the omission than Charles Mackenzie's employers. A severe reprimand followed; and, either from a high-spirited resentment at the sharp reproof, or from the irrepressible consciousness that he was not fitted for the honourable but uncongenial field of commerce, he once more took the reins himself, and leaving a brief farewell letter to his relative, he absented himself for the third and final time from his irksome occupation. However grieved and anxious his uncle might feel, and however the mother's heart might yearn over her truant son, both saw that it was of no avail struggling against what was impossible.

For some time he was lost, as it were, to his nearest relatives. He was slowly and hardly fighting his way up the first and difficult steps of what he in his last days characterised as an "exacting profession." No one, perhaps, but himself could ever know his struggles, and his brave endurance of hardship and discouragements. Nor was it till he had won a firm standing in his profession, and could justify by the result what

appeared like wayward disobedience, that he again made himself known to his family. The entire change of christian and surname had, of course, prevented his being regarded as a "Mackenzie," publicly or privately, though many became aware of the fact early in his career.

An amusing and characteristic mode of reintroducing himself to his uncle's family may here be mentioned. He walked coolly into Mr. Symonds's warehouse, and, without asking especially for his uncle, he began to inspect critically some of the bales of cloth that were on the floor, with a quiet familiarity that astonished the warehouseman in charge. "That is no bad cloth for the price," he said, in his measured dry tones that were afterwards so familiar to thousands. "That is, that——" said the astonished and perhaps suspicious man, "is——" "Thirty shillings a yard," interrupted Charles, pointing to the private mark that had not been altered since the time when, years before, he had been one of his uncle's *employés*. The alarmed and open-mouthed salesman stared blankly at the mysterious visitor, and privately confided to a companion afterwards that he thought it

must be a detective, or a yet more formidable character in disguise, who knew so intimately "the secrets of the prison-house."

It may be said in passing that the relative who had both repressed so strenuously and mourned so sincerely his nephew's "perverse inclinations," cordially welcomed back to his warm and affectionate regard the prodigal, who certainly had not "wasted his substance in riotous living." Mr. Symonds not only took pride in his nephew's talents and gloried in his fame, but, if truth must be told, he was seduced on more than one occasion to see his finished and laughter-provoking performance. And, however inconsistently, the good old gentleman would say with a pardonable exultation: "Ah, I taught the boy."

It was during his connection with this business that my father made the acquaintance of Mr. Mark Lemon. In after years he met Mark Lemon in the country, and later in London, where they became very intimate.

A chance attendance at an "At Home" of the elder Mathews made a strong impression on my father. Besides its effect on his choice of a profession, the exhibition of a genius as great as that

of Mathews so powerfully affected him that he never ceased to recall his first visit to the "At Homes," without arousing his early enthusiasm for an actor of a genius at once robust, truthful, and refined.

The effect of seeing the performances of Liston and Mathews was to arouse in my father the dormant love of acting, which for want of a stimulus had been long concealed. His course was that followed by so many of his fellow-comedians both before and after him. He determined to try his hand at some entertainment similar to those he had seen, and for the next twelvemonth he delighted his friends by giving some sketches, of which the following is an example, copied from his own neat and legible handwriting:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

The task I have undertaken this evening, savours a little, I fear, of presumption. To attempt an imitation of the great imitator, to stride after that Colossus of wit, humour, and mimicry, Mr. Mathews, is an undertaking that at one time my modesty ne'er dreamt of. But as my main object and sole motive in so doing is to procure

novelty and furnish amusement for my friends, I have suffered the aforesaid virtue (modesty) to die a martyr in the cause.

After the preface comes the work, so to work we go. I speak in the plural number, for unless you blow the bellows of your approbation, I fear my organs will produce but sorry music. The first character I have to present to your notice is Mr. Waglington, a man formed from his birth of an even temper and an easy disposition. Mr. Waglington laughed at the world because the world laughed at him. He walked (or rather sat) through life, with the greatest indifference as to its cares and its troubles. He generally sat with one leg across his knee, and as one got tired he shifted it to the other. He had one particular phrase which he consoled himself with on all occasions: "It *may* be so, but then again it may *not*." On paying him a visit one day, I asked him if he thought it would be fine. "Why," replied he, "it *may* rain, but then again it may *not*." When I entered he was reading "Daniels' Field Sports." Taking up the subject with him, I inquired whether he ever went on a hunting excursion. "Why, yes," said he, "I did go once on a bit

of a jaunt of the sort, but I made a sorry set out of it. I borrowed a gig of a friend of mine, and started for a day's pleasure, as I thought; but the horse was a stranger to me, and so, not having received a regular introduction to him, as soon as the chase commenced off he set at full speed with me inside the gig. I began to be alarmed; thinks I, there's danger here; I *may* go a little farther without being turned over, but then again I *may* not. Well, away he tore, over furrow and field, leaping every ditch and bank that came in his way, till at last I wished him in a 'hospital for *lepers.*' Well, presently I saw we were nearing a horse-pond, and I began to say to myself, 'I *may* get past this pond without being dropped in the middle of it, but then again I may *not.*' However, after running a tremendous risk, I escaped a broken neck that time, and after getting pretty safely through the remaining part of the chase, says I to myself, says I, 'Well, I *may* be tempted to go a-hunting again, but then again I may *not.*'"

At Mr. Waglington's I found another character in the person of Nathaniel Nag, as much unlike his master in temper as possible. Nathaniel was the

footman to Mr. Waglington, with a mind always uneasy; everything that was done in the house seemed a torment to him. One morning, while sitting in a room next to Nathaniel, I heard him animadvert on the multiplicity of troubles that had befallen him. But here I shall show him in a better light by giving a portrait of him thus: "Everything do go wrong in this house; there's master grumbles at everything I do. I don't know what they want of one. The cat gets in the way when I'm in a hurry (nice row she made under my window last night). Our small beer goes sour sooner nor anybody else's; I don't know how it is, I suppose I'm blamed for it. I lead the life of a toad under a harrow. (*Bell.*) There's the bell ringing now, 'cos I ain't busy enough; however, I won't answer it. (*Bell rings.*) Aye, ring away, I shan't come till I done my work. (*Ringing.*) That's right, keep it up; as fast as you keep on ringing I'll keep on not coming. (*Knock heard.*) There goes the knocker now—what do you want? Oh, you've dropped your marbles, have you? Well, you shan't have 'em. (*Knocking again.*) There's another knock; one of them knocks is runaway ones, but I won't answer it. Last night there was no rats catched in

the trap; there's plenty of rats in the house though, but the trap's out of repair. Dog howled all night through. What with him and the cat, I never got a wink of sleep. Master wears two pairs of boots a day, and a pair of shoes; that's done to give me a little extra trouble. The canary bird's moulting, too; feathers get into the clothes-brush—that's pleasant; and when I try to brush master's coat I makes it ten times worse than it was afore. The cat kittened in my hat-box last night; that was nice. I drowned six on 'em, though, in the water-butt, and it hasn't been found out. It won't poison me, I know, for I'm the only one in the house that don't drink water."

The next acquaintance I have to introduce to you is a long-legged, good-natured, raw-boned Scotchman. (*Imitation and sketch.*)

Next in rotation follows a character decidedly distinct from the two former. In passing a well-known soup-house in the city, my attention was attracted to an unsophisticated, simple son of Hibernia, whose mind seemed absorbed in perplexity, and monstrously puzzled by the odd, and to him novel appearance of some turtles, which had just arrived at the

door of the aforesaid house. While I was amusing myself with the poor fellow's astonishment and confusion, his eye accidentally encountered mine. I returned the glance as much as to say: "Come on, I'm ready for you." He seemed to understand what I meant, and immediately commenced to converse. "Plaise, sir, will you be so kind as to tell me what they call them there?" "Those, my friend, are turtles." "Hem —ha—what did ye say they were?" "Turtles, I tell you; turtles." "Are they turtles, sir?" "Yes; don't I tell you they are?" "Turtles, turtles, turtles; I think you said they were turtles, sir?" "Yes; I've told you over and over again they are turtles!" "Oh, they're turtles, are they, sir?" "My good fellow, I've told you half-a-dozen times they are turtles, and nothing but turtles, turtles, turtles." "Plaise, sir, will you be so kind as to answer me another question?" "Well, what is it?" "Plaise, sir, are they *real* or are they *mock* turtles?"

Though last not least in our dear love comes Mrs. Paulina Pry, a very agreeable, entertaining, middle-aged, mischievous old woman, endowed by nature with an ample share of those inquisitive propensities for which her amiable son, the great Paul,

was so celebrated. Like him; she was in the constant habit of dropping in to amuse her friends, with all the tittle-tattle and scandal the neighbourhood afforded. She was remarkably minute in her investigation of the furniture, chimney ornaments, etc. etc., of her friend's apartments, and if by accident she happened to miss any of them, it would form a constant source of uneasiness to her until she discovered where they were gone. But to do this lady justice the aid of dress is required, and I must therefore beg your indulgence for half-a-minute, while I prepare to show in her true colours. (*Dress.*) 'Ah! my dear, just dropped in, as I was passing, nothing more. Called at the Joneses to-day. Bronze inkstand gone—um, um. I say—Mrs. Wiggins seems to go to the obelisk very often; husband out of town, I believe. She always goes out at dusk, too, rather odd—um? Paid a visit to the newly-married couple last week. Don't seem very happy—um. Great disparity in age. He's a young man, while she can't be less than five-and-forty—um? Little jealous already, I'm told. I say, my dear, I don't see the tortoiseshell teacaddy. Upstairs, I suppose? Because, you know it used to stand under the chiffonier—um.

Tea'd at the Hopkinses' last night. Party of fifteen. Only fourteen spoons—um. The two Miss Hopkinses were obliged to *stir one another.*' "

Here the sketch ends, most likely finishing the first part of an entertainment. I think it will serve to give some idea of my father's early work, and all who knew his powers of mimicry will see a capital field for their display in the foregoing sketch.

CHAPTER III.

The Novitiate—Early Country Practice—His Progress and Popularity—Speeches and Presentations—A Country Actor's Life —An Offer for London.

His friends received this and others of his personations most favourably. Experience has shown that the opinions of friends are often contradicted by public taste, and many an aspirant for artistic distinction has failed to gain from the general public the recognition so warmly predicted by his personal intimates. Still, in this instance, the kindly encouragement was productive of good. The appreciation of his friends, combined with his increased distaste for a commercial life, made him decide to gratify his strong inclination for the stage. In 1826 his city life came to an end. Day-books gave way to play-books, play-bills usurped the place of bills of lading, and cash accounts were of no account; instead of posting the ledger, he posted off to "strut and fret his hour upon the stage," and

left off "taking down lines" of goods to take up lines of character.

His first act was to apply to the dramatic agent of that period, a Mr. Simms, who conducted his business at The Harp tavern, in Russell Street, Drury Lane. The house is still in existence as a tavern, but there are more dramatic agents than one in the present day, and, as a rule, they occupy more than one room. Country actors, in those days, were a very Bohemian lot; the room used as an office by day was the principal "smoking-room" at night; and there being no laws then to oblige public-houses to close at a certain hour, it needs no great stretch of the imagination to picture these worthy gentlemen "settling the affairs of the nation," making and demolishing reputations, and indulging in really comic songs, until the chimes of midnight, ringing out during a pause in the merriment, served to remind them of the progress of the "swift foot of Time." Old actors, too, will call to remembrance those "black sheep" of the professional flock who would not go home even when daylight did appear, but turned night into day, in company with many well-to-do young men who visited them. The vagabonds were very entertaining, and each

young man who joined their band was termed a "Pros," a diminutive of the word "Proselyte." The members themselves were termed "Nightcrawlers."

From Mr. Simms, then, to play at Lewes, an engagement was obtained, where my father commenced his career, playing "responsible" parts and "walking gentlemen" for a short time, and by a strict attention to business, and an earnest desire to get on, he very quickly succeeded in mastering the rudiments of his art. His experience of the profession so far had been anything but encouraging, for the old letters used on the Roman banners in "Coriolanus," etc., "S. P. Q. R.," were "freely translated" by the actors at Lewes into "Salaries paid queerly regularly;" and when an artist's remuneration happened, like my father's, to be of the smallest, it made somewhat of a difference both to his outer and inner man. He was, however, anything but daunted, and next procured an engagement from the same dramatic agent to play Captain Crosstree in the then new and highly-successful drama of "Black-eyed Susan," at Leicester. It was then Thursday morning, and the piece was to be produced on the following Monday. After paying the agent his fee, he found that his capital

from all sources amounted to five or six shillings. Nothing deterred, however, and without a word of his intention to the agent or anyone else, away he started at once to walk to Leicester, a distance of ninety-nine or one hundred miles. Well, to make a long story short, as he would have liked to have done with his long journey, he arrived at the theatre on the Monday morning during the last rehearsal of the piece, when the following dialogue ensued: "I want to see the manager." "I am the manager." "Oh! then I've come to play Captain Crosstree." "Have you indeed? Well, you ought to have been here on Friday, and as you haven't hurried yourself in coming here, perhaps you will see the necessity of getting back as quickly as possible, for, hearing nothing of you, I put someone else into the part, and I can't alter it now." Explanations being vain, with characteristic coolness, and perhaps a hope that all would yet be right, my father sat down after his long walk, being rather tired, and consoled himself until the evening with a meal of bread and cheese, and a smoke. Evening arrived, he determined, as he was not to be allowed to play in the piece, that he would, at least, see the performance; so, after getting a

free pass, in he went. What was his surprise to hear himself soon afterwards saluted by the name of Mackenzie by a gentleman in the circle, who turned out to be an old Huntingdon acquaintance, now a rising young doctor in the town of Leicester. Explanations ensued, the doctor immediately advanced the necessary funds for present wants, and, by his interest with the manager, persuaded that gentleman to enrol my father as one of the company, instead of condemning him to a walk more disheartening, though of the same distance, than the one he had just concluded. The manager's name was Raymond, and under his banner my father played both Richmond and Macduff.

We next find him joining a strolling company at Cromer, a small fishing village in Norfolk. Receiving the date of opening from the manager, he accordingly presented himself at the proper time, and to his surprise and dismay found, on applying at the stage-door, that the theatre would not open for a week. Being without funds, he really did not know how that week's expenses were to be met. Turning away from the stage-door in a state of disconsolate uncertainty, he heard a cheering voice from the opposite side of the way salute him thus: "Hallo! Compton,

old fellow, where are you going?" Looking round, he recognised the light comedian of the company, who happened to be an old acquaintance. To him he confided his impecunious condition, and his inability to get through the week, which statement was met by a cheery "Never mind, old boy, come along with me;" and straightway the light comedian took the young beginner to the house of call where actors most did congregate. Here, thanks to the free-and-easy style of his new companion, who, by-the-bye, had no money himself, the two were treated with comfortable board and lodging until the next Saturday, and, the manager arriving, together they were enabled to discharge their bill and settle down in lodgings.

The public of Cromer were, however, exceedingly backward in their support of genuine talent. On one occasion, however, a fervent admirer of the Thespian art—to wit, a servant-girl—observing the gentlemen of the company assembled outside the theatre, produced from under her apron a rabbit, and asked if they would let her see the performance if she bestowed on them the rabbit. Without the slightest hesitation her proposition was

at once agreed to, nor did they commence the performance until the favourite dainty was both cooked and eaten.

Leaving Cromer with a heavy heart, he next joined the Bedford circuit, under the management of Mr. Jackman, at the magnificent salary of a guinea a week, and played anything and everything, both comic and tragic, for the first twelvemonth. The name he assumed, that of Compton, was the surname of one of the wives of his grandfather, and his adoption of the name of Henry is due to the following circumstance. On entering theatrical life he was what is termed "raw," and allowed himself to be fleeced by the old stagers of the company, who, on one occasion, having insisted on drinking his health in liquor of his own ordering, demanded his christian-name that they might "do the thing properly." This took him by surprise, for he had not provided himself with a new christian-name, and hesitated about giving his real name of Charles. He therefore temporised by requesting them to guess it, which they at once proceeded to do. After unsuccessfully hazarding every name, as it seemed, but the right one, the chief of the party happened to call out,

"I've got it—it's Harry!" At this point my father could not help smiling at their omitting the popular name of Charles, and the last speaker accepting the smile and his silence as signs of assent, exclaimed, "There! it *is* Harry; I knew it was!" and so Harry it became until it lapsed into Henry, and of late years disappeared from the bills altogether.

We next hear of him from an old actor as "a promising stroller in old Jackman's troupe at Daventry in 1828." "As it were but yesterday," he goes on to say, "I recall him calmly surveying an outdoor squabble between two local viragos opposite the 'Wheat Sheaf.' Rehearsal being over, the meridian pipe impressively enhanced the effect of a solemn wish uttered in his well-known baritone that it could be 'settled amicably.' Half addressed to an eager lad of fourteen, this 'aside' was an irresistible draw to his bespeak the same evening, when he was (to the most callous critic) great in Dr. Pangloss, and quite intoxicating in the doleful tragedy of 'Guy Fawkes,' a comic song of the period."

It will be seen by the above that he was now launched into the sea of "low comedy," in which he sailed so smoothly ever afterwards. His great fancy,

however, was to play "light comedy" of the Charles Surface type, which he persisted in doing for some time, until a manager—it must have been Jackman—managed to convince him that his forte was "low" and not "light" comedy. It must have been about this time that he *first* appeared in London, or rather in Hammersmith, and it will be only right to give the following here :

A PEEP AT THE SIGNS AND LANDLORDS OF HAMMERSMITH.

Written by Mr. Compton, and Sung by him at the Theatre, Hammersmith.

When I the other morning
From London travelled down,
I took a walk thro' Hammersmith,
That place of great renown ;
I walked about from street to street,
My steps did there retrace,
Thinks I, I may as well notice
The odd things of the place.

Close to The Turnpike I observed
Rhodes, by the roadside,
For having swept The Cole-hole out,
Rhodes took from town a ride.
That he should leave such a pretty sign,
As The Cole-hole I'm surprised ;
But I suppose the *Rhodes* came
To be *McAdamized*. [here

Some silly people, we are told,
Build castles in the air ;
But to save that useless work, *Pocock*
Brought his from Windsor, here ;
The Long Walk at Windsor I've admired,
Likewise the Banner stiff, [had
And when The Castle moved, it
A long walk to Hammersmith.

The Duke of Suffolk left his arms
With *Mr. Smith* to keep,
So *Smith* is not armless of course,
Not even in his sleep.
There's another house in which the duke
I suppose has one day drank,
I mean that pretty corner-house,
That is kept by *Maybank*.

Jolly Bacchus dealt in wines
With the Gods above we know,
But finding business rather queer,
He took a shop below;
He pitch'd on the Suspension Bridge,
When from the clouds he came,
And as that place received him first,
He gave his house that name.

A man that has two christian-names,
A double Christian must be,
And if I mention *John Batty Tuke*,
I know he'll not be crusty;
No wonder that his beer's so good,
The reason's soon defined, [he
For as he keeps The Hop Poles,
Has only malt to find.

There's a house stands in Webb's Lane
With a funny sign enough,
And the landlord's a funny chap
If taken in the rough,
Master *Billy Haylett* 'tis I mean
A chap that's got some nous;
His roof is slated all about,
So he calls it The Thatch'd House.

Now passing thro' the Broadway,
The George came in my view,
So I dropt in just to see if I
Could learn a thing or two;
And so I did as I will tell,
For *Lindsey* he pleased me.
Says I, "You keep The George, I find."
"No," says he, "The George keeps me."

There's a *Brownjohn* keeps a White Hart,
Lawk how they mix the colours,
And if you please, when you are there,
He will mix the liquors;
Now when they christened him they put
The cart before the horse,
And if he must be done quite brown,
It should be *John Brown* of course.

There's that Hampshire Hog that *Rimel* keeps
Without any grub I'm told,

And when he speaks, he will have a
Shocking bad tale to unfold.
George Sims keeps The Dove Coffee House,
Where they have many a lark;
And *Foyle* keeps The White Bear, but at
The Salutation they keep *Dark.*

I hadn't been long here before
I heard of *Jasper Heard.*
You may think I'm telling fibs, but 'tis
All true upon my word;
You seldom have blue devils there,
For soon they can be cured,
As he has better spirits in the house
Where all his Hopes are Anchored.

Now *Hill* keeps The Six Bells
Pretty near the church,
That in case of accident, you may
Not be left in the lurch.
There's a Young Ship and an Old Ship;
And The Swan I've not forgot,
I don't think you'll get cold pig there,
But I've often seen *Pig-ot.*

Now in Hammersmith you'll see
A Black Bull and Red Cow,
But searching thro' the town, I find
There are no calves any how.
They keep wild beasts here, for I see
Lions Black and Red be.
A Cock and Magpie too are here,
Oh crikey! what a *Madeley.*

Now Hammersmith is a friendly place
As any in the land,
For whenever a stranger comes he will
Meet with A Friend at Hand.
The landlord of The Maltman
Is a good and safe card, sirs,
And in Hammersmith I know there are
Lots of Jolly Gardeners.

One night I went to Shepherd's Bush,
Being rurally inclined,
And tho' I may be sometimes deaf,
Just then I was not blind,
For I saw The Beaumont Arms
That my ideas did baffle,
For tho' there was no gaming there,
I know I saw a raffle.

There are many Angels in this place,
With whom we all are struck,
But there's one more public than the rest,
I mean that kept by *Starbuck*;
The Angel is the last I've named,
And as I've soared so high,
Lest you should take me down, my friends,
I'll bid you all good-bye.

From the Bedford he went to the Lincoln circuit, where he performed in all the legitimate comedies, and became an immense favourite. We are enabled to give here the speech he made at the Lincoln Shakespearean dinner, Mr. W. Robertson (the father of "Tom" Robertson and Mrs. Kendal) occupying the chair. The cutting is from *The Lincoln Gazette* of November 27th, 1832.

"Mr. Compton, on proposing 'the memory of Milton,' could not help observing that he thought it hard that the modern Puritans should bind him 'in calf,' and claim him for their own; they forgot, or perhaps it was not convenient to remember, that 'Paradise Lost' was founded on a play, that the 'Mask of Comus' was frequently represented, and that all his works had a positive dramatic tendency; perhaps it might arise from there being a devil in his most powerful effort, for whom their 'craft' had

always evinced a more than fraternal regard. He verily believed that much of their animosity to the drama arose from our having, in some of the recent German adaptations, introduced a devil or two on the stage, and broke in upon their hitherto undisputed monopoly; but we have now established a free trade in 'blue' ones, and they can't bear it. They are afraid that ours may be a match for them, and, like the Dragon of Wantley,

> Have a sting in his tail,
> Round and long like a flail,
> To make him grow bolder and bolder.

"It was observed by Defoe, who had the honour of being his satanic majesty's biographer, that if his highness could see his face in a looking-glass, according to the picture which his particular friends drew of him, he would most certainly commit suicide, and we should be troubled by his presence no longer, 'a consummation devoutly to be wished.'"

It was about this time that he first met the great Edmund Kean, who was then on his last tour. He played Marall to Kean's Sir Giles Overreach, and in the last act was so taken aback at Kean's

electrical rendering of the one word "Marall" (when he calls that character down to the front of the stage), that he quite forgot the words. When the piece was over, he apologised to the great little man, who received his excuses with great kindness, saying that he was getting accustomed to the representative of Marall losing his presence of mind, since it had occurred so often. My father thanked him, and left the room, saying in a tone of whispered regret, "I've hardly got my speech yet!"

Kean being a great favourite with the company, a deputation waited on the celebrated actor's secretary, John Lee, one morning, requesting the pleasure of Mr. Kean's company to a *recherché* tripe supper. On being acquainted by John Lee of the honour prepared for him, Kean at once invited the deputation to his room in the principal hotel of the town. My father, who was spokesman, then repeated the invitation, and was asked by Kean what a ticket would cost him. "Oh, sir," replied my father, "don't be afraid, you shan't be put to any expense; they're only ninepence!" Kean good-humouredly asserted that "that would not ruin him, and that his tripes had cost him a great deal more in his

time." He then begged them, as he would be unable to attend, to favour him by accepting several bottles of choice wines and spirits, which he would send over to them. They were only too favoured themselves, and the first toast proposed that evening was the health of Edmund Kean, which they drank with enthusiasm.

After a three years' spell, he went from the Lincoln to the York circuit—manager, Mr. Downe. Here he at once hit the taste of his audience, and in one rival playhouse and another so mastered his art, that his name became celebrated in all that part of the country, while large houses were the result of his name being put up for a benefit, and enthusiastic and delighted audiences greeted him everywhere. It must not be supposed that all this time his weekly stipend was in proportion to his deserts. On the contrary, the salaries in those days were exceedingly small, even when we take into consideration the fact that living was so much cheaper than it is now, and that an actor's wardrobe, though not, as some people imagine, "all wrapped up," like the Honourable Mr. Dowlas's, "in a blue and white pocket-handkerchief," would certainly have looked

very diminutive when placed beside the huge trunks and baskets that now form such an important part of the modern provincial actor "on tour." Indeed I have frequently heard my father speak of twenty-five and thirty shillings a week as being considered a very good salary for a first low comedian in those days, especially when the two or three benefits awarded to him in the chief towns "on circuit" were reckoned. This was the time when the low comedian, besides playing in three or four pieces a night, was always "down" for a comic song or two between the pieces, a species of hard work which, combined with frequent encores (if the singer were a favourite), was rather trying; but this circumstance we shall presently find my father alluding to himself. It was in the Lincoln circuit that my father made the acquaintance of Mr. J. H. Chute, then a renowned light comedian, afterwards the highly-popular and respected lessee of the Theatres Royal at Bristol; and they were again together in his next engagement (the York circuit). This acquaintance was soon ripened into a deep friendship, which time only served to strengthen, and death alone was able to dissolve. Many a long season did they rough it

together; many a long walk, sometimes as much as thirty miles, did they take in the daytime that they might open in some village on the same evening, and strange (though not always devoid of fun) were some of their experiences. When in Hull in 1836, the year of the great snowstorm, these anything but luxurious-lived actors received a great disappointment. They had arranged to dine together on Christmas Day, my father having received tidings of a hamper of good things which was to arrive from Lincoln, and, for this reason, naturally enough, they provided nothing themselves. On December 24th, this storm, which lasted for seven days, commenced. Down came the snow, but alas! not the hamper, for travelling was completely stopped; all the roads in most parts of the kingdom were blocked up, and the mails were detained. Under these circumstances our luckless artists were forced to send to the cook's-shop for something to eat, and to become the landlady's "thankful servants" for a small pudding. After that extravagant repast was over, they found solace, as many good men have done before, in a pipe, not of wine, but of fragrant and soothing tobacco.

To give an instance of the great care my father bestowed on his art, and the trouble he always took to be correct in his representations, I may mention that there lies before me at this minute his written translations of the several quotations from the classics that occur in the part of Dr. Pangloss, one or two of which I gladly copy as specimens.

"'*Nec gĕmĕre cessābit turtur.*' *Nec*—nor; *turtur cessabit*—will the turtle cease; *gemere*—to mourn. 'Nor will the turtle cease to mourn.'

"'Δημητήρ μὲν πλοῦτον ἐγείνατο'—*i.e.* in English characters, '*Deemeeteer men Plowton egīnăto.*' *Deemeeteer*—Ceres (the goddess of corn); *men*—truly; *egīnăto*—brought forth; *Plowton*—Plutus (the god of riches).

"'*Fama volat viresque.*' This is not a perfect sentence, nor do the words occur in this order in Virgil. I suspect that the quotation is compounded out of two passages, and that a part of the second is designedly suppressed. If this be the case, the quotation, fairly filled up, would be, '*Fama volat viresque eundo.*' *Fama*—fame; *volat*—flies; *acquiritque*—and acquires; *vires*—strength; *eundo*—in going. 'Fame flies, and acquires strength in going.'"

I do not think that a better instance than the foregoing quotations, so carefully translated, could be given to show the pains he invariably took to understand and appreciate his author, so that he, in his turn, might be understood and appreciated also.

On one occasion, when my father was in Yorkshire, the company had to cross the Humber. Their finances were not in a very flourishing state, and it was important to make the crossing as cheaply as possible. This was effected by, instead of using the ordinary mode of transit, going in the flat-bottomed boat used for carrying cattle. When about half the journey had been done they met another craft returning, the skipper of which called out to his friend who was taking the company over, "What's thee gotten, Bill?" "Nobbut lakers* and dung," was the unflattering reply shouted across.

During my father's engagement in the York circuit a dinner was given in his honour at Leeds, and on that occasion we find him delivering the following speech:

GENTLEMEN,

To address you in the hackneyed phrase of our public journals, my feelings on the present

* A Yorkshire term for strolling players.

occasion "may be more easily imagined than described." Whether the lack of appropriate language to express my feelings arises from my own incapability, or the limited resources of my mother-tongue, I cannot take upon myself to say, but I will presume so far as to assert that neither words, phrases, nor diction can convey to your minds the warmth of my gratitude, the sincerity of my thanks, or the heartfelt satisfaction I now enjoy in acknowledging this mark of your kindness and approbation. So flattering a compliment to my humble histrionic efforts, combined with the favourable opinion you are pleased to entertain of my private character, is doubly gratifying to my feelings both as a man and an actor. I fear, gentlemen, that in the kindness of your hearts you have somewhat overrated my merits in both cases, though, charity would add, you have erred on the right side; and rest assured, gentlemen, that this additional proof of the very liberal estimation in which you hold me will serve as a powerful stimulant to renewed exertions in my profession, and still more strenuous endeavours to merit your good opinion. In the course of my professional peregrinations I have visited many towns, been so fortunate

as to form many acquaintances and make many friends (and if not irrelevant to the subject I would, in gratitude for past favours, particularise the Lincolnshire circuit, where I received the greatest attention and the kindest treatment, both from public and private friends); but never in my life, either in or out of the profession, did I receive so great an honour as you have conferred upon me to-day, and for which, gentlemen, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. "Rude am I in speech, and little blessed with the set phrase of"—gammon; those who know me are perfectly aware that I would scorn to flatter any man; I don't admire the principle of it. Where the softer sex are concerned I believe a little license is allowed, and a "little flattery sometimes does well," but for men to stand up and flatter each other, "one down and t'other come on," I call it despicable, maudlin, and contemptible. At the same time I should consider myself justly liable to the imputation of ingratitude were I to allow the present opportunity to escape me without acknowledging the unprecedented and overwhelming debt of obligation under which I am laid to a gentleman here present. I've an idea that you have a shrewd suspicion as to the individual

to whom I allude; and not to keep you longer in suspense, let me say at once that he was christened George, and is surnamed Bichoff. I know he is not fond of being thanked or complimented, it is one of the peculiarities of his character. To compliment him, however, is not my intention; and though I am the last person in the world to disturb the cool serenity of any man's mind, still my word of thanks is an infliction that must be laid upon him, it can't be dispensed with, and "so help me Solomon," it "sarves him right." What business has he to overload a poor jackass like me with a double pair of panniers crammed full of kindness and generosity? It's really unbearable. Besides, I can't see that I deserve such treatment. I never did anything but my poor endeavours towards pleasing him, with the rest of my friends, in my acting, and yet, not satisfied with the most strenuous exertions towards filling my house, but he must get up a subscription for a snuff-box, if you please. But I've one little modicum of revenge left, and I'll do my best to "serve him out:" I'll propose his health! Before I drop my perpendicular, gentlemen, allow me once more to thank you, not only for the honour, but

for the happiness you have conferred upon me. I assure you, gentlemen, in the words of Mr. Gillman, you have rendered this the "happiest day of my life!"

The inscription on the snuff-box runs as follows:

PRESENTED
By the Frequenters of the Theatre Royal, Leeds, to
HENRY COMPTON,
In testimony of their admiration of his professional excellence as a Comedian,
LEEDS, NOV. 1ST, 1836.

SEVENTY-EIGHT SUBSCRIBERS.

The George Bichoff mentioned in the foregoing was a Saxon gentleman dwelling in Leeds, being a merchant in the wool trade. Both Mr. Chute and my father were acquainted with a great number of Germans (very good fellows) in the wool trade, which was carried on very briskly at Leeds in those days. It was undoubtedly on the occasion alluded to a few lines back, namely, when my father was the honoured guest, that a gentleman became very incoherent in his speech, and otherwise "peculiar,"

some time before the cloth was removed. Being promptly brought to book by the Chairman, he very readily excused himself in this way, addressing my father: "Mr. Compton, I'm drunk—in fact I'm *very* drunk; and on an occasion like this I would be ashamed of myself if I were not!"

These complimentary meetings, which usually took place in the principal room of the principal inn of the town, must have been exceedingly enjoyable to the company in general, as well as extremely gratifying to my father in particular. As the old-fashioned country inns become fewer and fewer, so do the old fashions in connection with them gradually die away, and the consequence is that we seldom, unfortunately, read an account such as the following, which is taken from a Hull newspaper, and headed:

"TRIBUTE TO MR. COMPTON.

"Several friends and admirers of Mr. H. Compton, of our Theatre Royal, on Wednesday evening invited that gentleman to supper at The Bull and Sun, where a respectable party sat down to a most sumptuous repast, served up by Mrs. Banks. After several routine toasts and a few songs, Mr. Compton was

presented with an elegant gold watch-guard, as a mark of esteem felt by the subscribers for his private worth, and of admiration for his talents as an actor. The gentleman selected to present the chain alluded to the fact that in Leeds a snuff-box had been given Mr. Compton, and hoped the present gift would not be the less valued because it bore no inscription. He could say that a lively remembrance of the delight experienced through Mr. Compton's efforts would be indelibly engraven upon the remembrance of all who had witnessed them; and though comparatively few were there to testify their meed of approbation, yet from a manifestation made on a late occasion—that of his benefit—there might, had the intention been more extensively known, have been found a friend for every link of which the chain was composed. (Cheers.) Mr. Compton's health was then drank with all the honours.

"In acknowledging the honour paid him, Mr. Compton delivered a humorous and pointed address. After thanking the company for the substantial tribute of their approbation with which they had honoured his services, he said: 'Allow me, gentlemen, for a few moments to indulge in metaphor. I have

now served under your banners for three successive seasons, and through your kind indulgence, I believe I may add successfully. (Applause.) On first entering your service and embarking in your good ship The Theatre Royal, master, T. J. Downe, Esq., I had individually and conjointly with my shipmates much to contend with. The two first voyages we made did not, I confess (from an undefinable cause), terminate with very brilliant success; for though we *worked hard, played hard, fought hard,* and had many *hard* engagements, we brought home very little *hard* cash with us. (Laughter and applause.) During this period many exchanges were made in the crew. At the time of enrolling my name in the ship's books she boasted a full complement of men, out of which only a few are now remaining. I cannot say the absentees have either deserted or been washed overboard, but they have been drafted into other vessels, while the three or four remaining have weathered the storm, stuck to the ship, stood to their guns, and have still the honour of treading the planks of the good old hull. (Cheers and laughter.) It is unnecessary for me to tell you what has been the result of this adherence to our favourite frigate; you have been eye-

witnesses to our last trip proving a most advantageous cruise. You have seen us taking in *stores* (cheers), and can bear ample testimony that your humble servant, as second mate, has nibbled a *double share* of prize-money. (Loud cheers and laughter.) Reports were in active circulation some time ago that I was about to quit your service to accept a commission on board a seventy-four on the southern station, and all the rumours were not entirely groundless at that time. I frankly confess that at the present writing I am not anxious for promotion, nor do I just now consider myself a liberty-man. (Laughter.) My good friends at Leeds (whose kindness and liberality I proudly acknowledge) laid an embargo on me, and dropped a heavy anchor on my movements in the shape of a snuff-box. (Applause.) This of course acts as a detainer. You, however, have literally *chained* me to you (loud applause), and absolutely set a *guard* over me, apparently determined to *link* one more firmly to you, and in the double sense of the term compel me to keep my *watch.* (Loud laughter.) In thus buckling fortune on my back, you have bound me in a *golden bond* to serve my time to you." (Loud cheers.)

For point, wit, and humour, the foregoing speech is absolutely refreshing; and when we draw, alas! upon our memory for the sweet smile, the earnest delivery, and the ever-varying expression of countenance of the artist who pronounced it, we do not require to be told by the reporter of the effect it produced.

As I am dealing in this memoir, more particularly with my father's public career, it is scarcely necessary for me to do more just now than quote his own words, as I have done, to show the advance he was so rapidly making in his profession, and the hold he possessed on the public favour. The life of a country actor in those days was not without its enjoyments, particularly for those whose cares were neither plentiful nor weighty, and of these my father was fortunate enough to be. He had always been greatly fond of walking, and the journeys already mentioned will show that he could do a good day's walk along the turnpike-road. During his stay in the country his days were usually spent in this manner.

The morning was given up to rehearsal and study; then followed a good long walk with some

companion, perhaps Mr. Chute or Mr. Binge. Dinner naturally succeeded to exercise, and the afternoon was spent in discussing his "churchwarden"—the pipe, not the official—and his paper, or he would join a friend in a pleasant pipe and a good talk over professional affairs, the frequency of rehearsals, the luck of casts, Brown's stage-wait of last night or the chances of the next benefit. The actor, like all other men, takes special pleasure in discussing his own profession; nor is he more addicted to "shop" than the artist, doctor, or lawyer, while the army-reformer and the amateur politician are infinitely more wearying. With some of my father's fellow-actors the conversation was of a more general character, touching on the politics of the day, the literary novelties the strollers might have heard of, but still having a tendency to return to professional subjects, such as the right view of Shakespearean and old comedy-parts.

It is but natural to suppose that a comparison of ideas on the proper interpretation of such a part as Bob Acres or Dogberry, should show the young actor points that he had not considered, suggest modifications of his own view, and thus lead to a

minute study of the part, so that its rendering might be as consonant with truth as possible.

To the afternoon passed in this manner succeeded tea, and then came the actor's longing to get to the theatre and begin work. After the performance it was the custom for the actors, with their friends, to adjourn to some tavern of local fame, and there pass a social hour or two before seeking the rest they so well deserved. This practice of going to taverns in the evening was common to all classes at that time, owing to the non-existence of clubs or other facilities for intercourse; but the wealthier and more respectable people naturally frequented the best-conducted taverns, where they invited their player friends.

At this time my father was young, in the first flush of great physical vigour, and consequently full of high spirits; and as, besides these advantages, he was following a calling for which he had a very deep love, no wonder, as he said in after-life, that he should have enjoyed it thoroughly, and have looked back upon his successful provincial career with feelings of keen pleasure.

At this period the country actor received an offer

to play in London, which was eagerly accepted; and at his farewell benefit at Leeds we find him taking leave of his many kind friends in these terms:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

Taking leave in most cases is but a sorry, melancholy piece of business, and consequently entirely out of my line; still, after the extreme kindness and liberality you have always loaded me with, I should be guilty of ingratitude were I to leave you without a few words at parting. However, as I part with you under the strong conviction and sincere hope that a future period will bring us together again (under what circumstances I cannot pretend to say), I trust you will give me credit for sincerity if my address, instead of extracting tears from you, should have the contrary effect. I am sadly afraid that something in the shape of an eloquent oration is expected from me on this occasion. Ladies and gentlemen, Nature has not endowed me with a poetical soul, for, notwithstanding her liberality in other respects, this is a gift that either slipped her memory, or she fancied that it would not amalgamate with her other endowments. Had

I a muse at my command to amuse you with (excuse the pun) I would willingly have substituted poetry for prose; but in the absence of rhyme, I must resort to metaphor:

> For this my poetry a bore you'd call,
> As neither Attic nor historical,—
> I trust you'll like me better in the metaphorical.

There, ladies and gentlemen, that's my own. I mention this to save you the trouble of ransacking your memories in order to discover amongst which of the celebrated ancient or modern poets this effusion is to be found. I believe, in the usual process of manufacture, the raw material is put into your hands to be worked up and converted into a tangible form or shape; after which it is offered for sale to the highest bidder who may be inclined to purchase. Such is pretty nearly the case with the article now occupying your attention. I have, however, vanity enough to believe that I was not presented to you entirely in the raw, for I had undergone the process of several severe dressings in other counties. Yorkshire, however, has been long celebrated for its superior finish, and the metropolis itself can bear ample testimony to this fact, when they trace among

the most superb and highly-finished material that ever graced their dramatic warehouses stuff that was worked up in Yorkshire. Heaven forbid that I should be guilty of the presumption of comparison. On the contrary, I am perfectly aware that the same manufacture displays a great variety in the quality of its produce, and also that certain textures will not admit of or receive the fine gloss and exquisite finish which has stamped the fame and set so high a price on the goods already forwarded from this market. At the same time, ladies and gentlemen, I have too good an opinion of the judgment of my friends in the North to suppose that the rough sample that has been so well received by them, should be exactly a drug in the London market; I live in hopes that if I am put up at a fair price and meet with fair play, I may stand a fair chance of success. And now, ladies and gentlemen, for those two hard words "Good-bye, friends." In taking my leave, allow me to take the liberty of addressing you in three distinct divisions, as Messrs. Boxes, Pit, and Gallery. To the occupants of the boxes I am deeply indebted, not only for their countenance this evening, but also for their kind and liberal support on previous

occasions. It is a matter of no small gratification to myself when I reflect that, though that walk of the drama I have chosen is styled "low," I still receive the high compliment of their approbation, for which, in addition to other favours, I beg to offer my humble acknowledgments. Critics of the pit, though I now look down on you, I have hitherto been obliged to look up to you for your good opinion, and in the plenitude of your indulgence you have generously borne with my faults, and frequently, I'm afraid, overrated my humble merits; for both of which I trust you will accept my sincere thanks. "Ye gods," I thank you! To you I am indebted for many a thundering round of applause, for many a cheering shout, from which I naturally infer that I also stand well with you; but I have a crow to pluck with you, and I shall be candid enough to tell you to your faces in what way you have offended. Mainly through your means I have not unfrequently been obliged to do double duty, and when a song has been advertised in the bills to be sung once, you have unconscionably demanded it a second, and often a third time. This you must admit is very unreasonable, but as I wish to part friends, and

as you've overlooked many an error on my part, I will forgive this fault of yours, and beg leave to thank you for your kind receptions on all occasions, and your company on this. And now, ladies and gentlemen collectively, allow me to assure you that, however fate may dispose of me, wherever Fortune or her eldest daughter may direct my steps, I shall bear with me a heavy load of obligation, and at the same time a proportionate weight of gratitude, for the kindness, generosity, and liberal treatment I have always received at the hands of my Leeds friends!*

* The *pièce de résistance* on that evening was "Much Ado about Nothing," with my father as Dogberry, Mr. Creswick as Benedick, Mr. Chute as Don Pedro, Mr. Binge as Claudio, and Mrs. Morton Brooks as Beatrice. Besides the ladies and gentlemen just mentioned, the company included Messrs. H. Widdicomb, Tom Horton, J. T. Downe, Lambert, Butler, Newnam, and Ryder; Miss Delcy, Miss Paget (afterwards Mrs. Creswick), Miss Melville, Miss Tyrer, Mrs. Edwardes, and Mrs. Turner. Rophino Lacy was the musical director.

CHAPTER IV.

Début in London—His Success—Principal Parts—Drury Lane—Macready—Leaves London.

THIS was my father's last public speech as a provincial actor. What he had been working for, what had been the object of his every effort, the theme of his conversation, and the subject of his thoughts and dreams—the common goal of all his fellows—an appearance in London, was soon to be his. At the age of thirty-two, after eleven years' careful country practice, he had earned for himself an enviable prominence among provincial actors, he had made himself beloved by his intimates and respected by his companions, he was prompted by an earnest determination to deserve success, and animated by the not unreasonable expectation that the powers, which had gained him the position he was now relinquishing, would secure his triumph in the great crisis of his professional career. In the life of almost every artist,

painter, poet, or actor, there occurs a crucial period, sometimes of defined character and appointed time, sometimes, and more often apparently, the choice of careless chance; in either case it is a juncture fraught with weighty issue, and many are they who have failed to pass safely through the ordeal. The dramatic profession happily possesses a natural opportunity for the public to make its final decision, and to set the *cachet* of its approval on the worthy actor. This opportunity is the transition from country theatres to the London stage, and this occasion has been long regarded both by the profession and the public as the time for the actor

> To put it to the touch—
> To lose or gain it all.

At the time when my father made his first appearance in London the step was one of infinitely greater importance than it is in the present day. Owing to the increase in the number of theatres, and also to the far larger class interested in matters theatrical, the conditions are very much changed, so that the London *début* no longer possesses the immense significance it once had. At that time a country actor's introduction to a London audience was a matter of

much concern to all playgoers, a thing to be discussed and debated beforehand in all its aspects, and an event eagerly anticipated, especially if the new-comer was heralded by a good report from the provinces.

Besides the usual obstacles that all competitors in art have to contend against, there is one which peculiarly affects the actor, who, unlike some other artists, appeals only to the limited number that can behold his performance. Moreover, the sympathies and preferences of the playgoers are already secured by the artists established in London. It is not only a matter of playing the part truthfully, but also of playing it in such a manner as to bear comparison with some favourite whose rendering is the standard by which the audience judges the stranger's efforts. The country actor has to struggle with a rival whose name is a household word with playgoers—whose peculiarities have become so familiar that they are sometimes thought to be essentials, and whose very faults may even be regarded as merits, and any deviation from the accepted portrayal of a part is more likely to arouse keen criticism than to excite admiration.

At the time when my father made his appear-

ance in London, Charles Kean, Macready, Old Dowton, Farren, Keeley, and Harley, among actors, and Miss Helen Faucit, Mrs. Warner, Mrs. Keeley, and Miss P. Horton among actresses, were the reigning planets in the theatrical firmament. It was from audiences accustomed to such artists as these that my father had to win recognition.

His old friends (and amongst his fellow-actors will have been noticed the name of Mr. Creswick) accordingly wished him "God speed," and not only expressed themselves as being, but really were very sorry to say "Good-bye" to him! One of the company, Mr. Binge (a charming ballad-singer), never lost sight of his old companion and favourite, and, like Mr. Chute, remained his tried and true friend till death. A touching incident occurred at the moment of departure. To one of the company my father had, some time previous, lent the sum of one pound. As he foresaw that much outlay would be needed to make a satisfactory first appearance, both on and off the stage, he now asked his friend if he would kindly pay him. "No, Compton, no; I couldn't think of it," was the reply. "Why not?" demanded my father, in some surprise. "Well, you

see, we 'provincials' are not allowed many luxuries, nor are we permitted to make many proud boasts; so you really must excuse me if I say that—I will owe a London actor a sovereign!"

On the bills of the English Opera House (Lyceum Theatre), announcing its opening under new management (Mr. Bunn's), appeared a notice that "Mr. Harry Compton, from the Theatre Royal, York, will make his first appearance in London on Thursday next, July 20th, 1837, in the character of Tommy Tadpole, and will immediately appear in a new farce written expressly for him." In consequence of the indisposition of Miss Romer, the theatre did not open until the Monday following, when the two farces were changed to "The Waterman" and "Master's Rival," in the former of which my father appeared as Robin, and in the latter as Paul Shack.

Old Chorley, one of the severest critics of that time—and they could be severe—thus comments on his *début.* "We have also, as well as we could judge him from a part which did not afford him any very great opportunities, to congratulate the play-going public upon the acquisition of a low comedian of the right school in the person of Mr. Compton.

He appears to us to be a sensible and chaste actor, one who has a proper respect for the part he has undertaken to represent, and a proper contempt for any laugh which is obtained at the sacrifice of its true position in the piece."

The new farce mentioned above was from the pen of Mr. R. B. Peake. It was entitled "A Quarter to Nine," and we read, was received "with undivided laughter and applause." The author had thus introduced himself to the actor, while the latter was still in the country.

Private, but not Official.]

T. R., Lyceum, and English Opera House,
July 1, '37.

MY DEAR SIR,

I introduce myself to you. My friend and my brother-author, Mark Lemon, has given me such an account of you, that I feel thoroughly assured Mr. Bunn has not bought a "pig in a poke." Be assured that your introduction to London at this period as a "comedian" (albeit theatricals are in a bad state), is just at the right time. If you are the man I take you to be—and I somehow or other

feel sure I shall not be disappointed—what a gratification it will be for me in your success.

I send you my original MS. of the one-act piece, in which I should wish you to appear; excuse the ragged state of it, but the copyists have effected that. I will make you drawings for the dresses of the three characters. If you have any *sure song* you would like to sing, I will introduce it for you.

Succeed in this ostensible part, there is no actor in London with whom a comparison may be made, even by the most ill-natured. I have friends who can assist both you and me, but they will be useless if you have talent; for talent will make its own way; and where talent exists, the press are never backward in supporting it.

I am told that you have considerable humour, and that you are a gentleman. We have low comedians in London who possess the first quality, but are minus in the latter. A gentleman will always make his way.

No effort of mine shall be spared to help your success; and if the public take to you, there are four more parts to follow this.

Theatricals must turn for the better, as they are

at their worst. The young queen must be fêted. She will encourage the stage; all young persons love it.

I have written briefly and in haste, but would not send the manuscript without a few lines.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

R. B. PEAKE.

H. Compton, Esq.

P.S.—Would you like to be announced and paragraphed as Mr. Harry Compton? I should say Yes.

From the tone of this letter the reader will doubtless have gathered the fact that Mr. Peake, besides being dramatic author to the establishment, was also Mr. Bunn's treasurer and acting-manager. We are enabled to follow up his letter with another from the great Harley.

Upper Gower Street, 15th August, 1837.

DEAR SIR,

On my return to town let me thank you for your polite attention in taking charge of a letter from my friend Lockwood at York. I have much

pleasure in congratulating you upon the occasion of your professional visit to the great city, and am, dear sir, with best wishes,

Yours truly,

J. P. HARLEY.

This comedian, with the elder Mathews and the celebrated Liston, were the gods of my father's early idolatry, and always remained his prime favourites of the comic school. In speaking of tragedians, he always cited Edmund Kean as the greatest genius that ever adorned the stage. He saw him two or three times, but only played with him once, as I have before mentioned, and that as a very young man. One of the pieces was "The Iron Chest," with Kean as Sir Edward Mortimer, my father appearing as Fitzharding. At a certain point in one very important scene the dialogue runs thus: Sir Edward having suddenly entered, and surprised Wilford with Fitzharding whispering to him, he makes his presence known, and they start, Wilford confusedly.

Wilford. Who calls? Eh—'tis Sir Edward!

Fitzharding. Mum.

Sir Edward. I seem to interrupt you.

Wilford (*earnestly*). No, indeed; no, on my life, sir. We were only talking of——

Fitzharding. Hold your tongue! Oons boy! you must not tell!

Sir Edward at this turns sharply round to Fitzharding, and suddenly says "*Not?*" Kean having been absent from rehearsal, my father was not prepared for the manner in which this monosyllable was to be uttered, and when the cue had been given, such was the magic of the great tragedian's eye, which he bent full on my father, that the young actor stood transfixed, and could not reply. So they stood, looking at each other, until Kean, seeing the state of the case, very good-naturedly walked over to him and managed, unperceived, to give him the word, and the scene proceeded. After the act was over the offender went to the great man's dressing-room, as he had done on a former occasion, and in his straightforward manner explained and apologised. "Don't mention it, my lad," returned Kean; "it's a very trying scene;" then, as my father was preparing to go, he added—"I'll tell you what, young sir; you played the part devilish well!"

Macready, my father used to say, was the best

Joseph Surface he ever saw, and the elder Farren the finest actor of old men. Webster he considered a great artist; Wright's humour he could not see; Charles Mathews's finished style he always admired; and no one appreciated Buckstone's and Keeley's fun more than he did. But I am diverging from the direct road of circumstances that I have hitherto pursued, and must desist lest I find a difficulty in retracing my steps.

At the English Opera House, then, the new comedian grew in public favour until September 28th, 1837; and during this time, besides those characters already mentioned, appeared as Willibald, "Bottle Imp;" Jean Jachêre, "Blanche of Jersey;" Alessio, in the opera of "La Sonnambula;" Tranquille, "Little Laundress;" McSwill, "The Vampire;" Christie, "Mountain Sylph;" Pan, "Midas;" Tobias Shortcut, "Spitfire," etc.

Amongst the company I notice the names of Miss Romer, Miss P. Horton (Mrs. German Reed), Miss Rainforth, and Mrs. Frank Matthews; Messrs. Allen, Brindal, Diddear, W. Bennett, E. Seguin, and the celebrated dancers, Mr. Gilbert and Miss Ballin (Mrs. Gilbert). For Mr. Peake's benefit, September 28th,

1837, I find the following additional names: Miss Poole, Mr. Balfe, Mr. Duruset, Mr. Leffler, and Mr. Tyrone Power, the great Irish comedian, who played Dr. O'Toole.

On Saturday, October 7th, in the same year, so much had the public taken to him, that my father was transferred to Drury Lane, where we find him appearing under Mr. Bunn's management as Master Slender in "The Merry Wives of Windsor," with Dowton as Falstaff, and Mrs. C. Jones as Dame Quickly. A critic, remarking on this my father's latest venture, said: "It was a magnificent piece of acting; seldom has anything been seen like it before; and it will probably be a long time before another actor makes his appearance who will be at all worthy of being compared with Mr. Compton in this character." His next hit was as Tony Lumpkin in "She Stoops to Conquer," with Miss Charles as Miss Hardcastle; Mrs. C. Jones, Mrs. Hardcastle; Old Dowton, Hardcastle; and J. S. Balls, Young Marlowe. Gnatbrain, in "Black-Eyed Susan," followed; and in "As You Like It," we find the future Touchstone *par excellence* playing William on this occasion, Miss Charles being the Rosalind; Dowton, the Touchstone; and Mr. Butler, the Jaques (first time).

His next success was Silky in "The Road to Ruin," spoken of as "a fine bit of character acting;" and Launcelot Gobbo in "The Merchant of Venice," further increased his rapidly-rising reputation; Mr. Ternan was the Shylock, making his first appearance in London in that character, and Portia was played by Mrs. Lovell. The greatest success, however, that he made during this season, was by his performance of Mawworm in "The Hypocrite." Liston had been the last there, and my father's consternation at finding himself, not only in the great comedian's great part, but in his dress also, may be more easily imagined than described. He confided his distress to Mrs. C. Jones, who was playing Old Lady Lambert, and she very good-naturedly did her best to reassure him before he went on, and was the first to congratulate him on his great performance when he came off. His conception of Mawworm was entirely original, and was the result of an odd accident. Taking his walks abroad with a friend one Sunday evening, at the time he was studying the part, they happened to pass a Dissenting chapel, from whence proceeded a sonorous and deep-toned voice, evidently belonging

to one of that sect familiarly known as "Ranters." Remarking to his friend: "Here's my man—I've got him at last!" he walked in and took his seat. Perhaps no one ever listened so attentively to a preacher as he did on this occasion, and the consequence was that, by "holding the mirror up to that preacher's nature," he delighted the public in this part for a good forty years. He continued at Drury Lane, appearing with the same success as Bailie Nicol Jarvie ("Rob Roy"), and the First Gravedigger to two Hamlets, Mr. Otway and Mr. Charles Kean. In this latter part he was extraordinarily successful, and the press and public were loud in their praises of this grand piece of character acting. In the recent unparalleled run of "Hamlet" at the Lyceum, my father played his old part better than ever; and feeling sure that Mr. Irving is too sound an actor, as well as a gentleman of too great common sense, to object to or gainsay the following extract from one of the many criticisms on his most successful effort, I readily place it before my readers, merely pointing out to them that it does not at all take away from Mr. Irving's performance as a whole. "Nothing could be more painful to Mr. Irving's

undiscriminating friends than to notice that, while in every scene but one in the play of 'Hamlet' he was the centre of attraction and the hero, he in that one scene, in which he came to dialogue with the Gravedigger, Mr. Compton, fell immediately and naturally into the second place. Artist as he was, he was 'green,' as Polonius would have it, in the presence of the older and more experienced artist."

It was about the time of Kean's appearance at Drury Lane that Mr. Buckstone came amongst them, playing Wormwood ("Lottery Ticket"), and Jonathan Tunks in a new farce, "Our Mary Anne," my father appearing as Solomon. On January 30th, 1838, we read of a grand concentration of musical talent for one night only, being the anniversary of King Charles the Martyr. The "Creation" and other sacred music formed the programme, in which my father's name does not appear. We next find his name down for Lopez in "The Duenna," Buckstone playing Isaac Mendoza; Dowton, Don Jerome; Miss Romer, Donna Clara; and Mrs. C. Jones, the Duenna.

We now come to one of my father's greatest triumphs, on account of the part being quite out

of his line. The play was Massinger's "New Way to Pay Old Debts," produced for Mr. Charles Kean —whose success as Hamlet and Richard III. had been very great—to give to the public his rendering of Sir Giles Overreach. An eye-witness remarks: "I well remember a substantial triumph of Compton's in Marall at Drury Lane, where he kept Sir Giles waiting (and fuming), while the house got through three of the heartiest rounds of applause I ever heard given to comedy. That this was achieved by legitimate means, and without trick or grimace, *va sans dire* to old playgoers."

His next successes were as Wagner, "Gipsy's Warning;" Tristram Lappy, "Deaf as a Post;" Jack Humphries, "Turning the Tables;" and Motley, "Castle Spectre." Another great triumph was in store for him, when he appeared on June 5th, 1838, as Dr. Ollapod, in "The Poor Gentleman." A critic of our day, speaking of this performance, has remarked: "Even to that farcical creation of Dr. Ollapod he imparted a breadth and dignity which lifted it into the domain of pure comedy. The spectator felt there was a reserve of humour behind his most extravagant flights, a feeling that always

increases the sense of enjoyment. With an eccentric in real life there is the same; we do not know what surprise may be in store for us. A wealthy man who is fond of displaying his treasures, exhibiting rings and jewellery on his person in proof of his riches, does not impress us nearly so much as the sober and unostentatious personage who we know can fill in his cheque for a substantial amount. No better illustration of different schools of humour could be given than the rendering of Dr. Ollapod, by both Mr. Clarke and Mr. Compton. The former made it a rollicking exuberant character; one complete in itself, and independent of the drama, its characters, and situations, and highly laughter-moving. But Mr. Compton's rendering was of another order altogether. He relied on a certain gravity and solemnity, always great elements in comedy. There was a Malvolio air about him, and one could not help thinking of Lamb's description of Bensley, which, indeed, comes next only to seeing the play itself acted. Again, mark the impression left by these two different modes of reading a character. Where there is this rollicking fun and overrunning humour of glance and gesture, it will be found that there is a sameness in the player's

characters, and that in some new part he is compelled to empty his wallet of precisely the same moves. Not so with the player who keeps his external arts under regulation, and trusts to a more intellectual reading. For, as the intellect is the most inexhaustible and varied thing in the world, the player who trusts to it can never be accused of sameness, and has always a handsome balance at his bank."

For Mr. Dowton's benefit, when "The School for Scandal" was performed, we find, in addition to the regular company, the names of Farren, Sir Peter Teazle; Harley, Sir Benjamin; Keeley, Moses; Madame Vestris, Lady Teazle; and Mrs. Glover, Mrs. Candour. "Naval Engagements" followed, with Charles Mathews as Lieutenant Kingston, and Mrs. Orger as Mrs. Pontifex; Madame Vestris and Farren being the Miss Mortimer and Admiral Kingston. On Her Majesty's Coronation Day, June 28th, 1838, the theatre was opened gratuitously to the public, "The Belle's Stratagem" and "The Youthful Queen" comprising the programme. This was the last night of the season.

On Monday, July 2nd, 1838, we find my father back at the English Opera House, appearing as André

and Edmonde (twin brothers), in a new musical farce by Peake, entitled "Gemini." Then comes Hal the Tinker ("Rob of the Fen"), and then the engagement of William Shakespeare, a veritable descendant of the immortal bard, who appeared in a dramatic sketch of his own writing, entitled "The Queen's Command." This was played eight times, and then gave place to "The Witch of Derncleugh" (Planché's "Guy Mannering")—Dominie Sampson, Mr. Compton; Meg Merrilies, Madame Simon. Mark Lemon's farce of "The M.P. for the Rotten Borough," gave my father another opportunity of doing some good original work as Jerry Chance (a gentleman looking out for preferment). This met with complete success, and is yet fresh in the memory of those that are left of the playgoers of forty years ago. "The Evil Eye," "Rob Roy," "The Slave," "The Emigrant's Daughter," and the new farce of "The Gray Doublet" followed in quick succession, in all of which my father made his mark. For Mr. Peake's benefit we find Wrench and the Keeleys appearing in the farce of "The Middle Temple;" Miss P. Horton, Miss Poole, Mr. Frazer, and Mr. Compton in "The Mountain Sylph;" and Miss Rainforth,

Mrs. Serle, Mr. Le Jeune, and Mr. Wieland in "The Devil's Opera." Also a "musical *mélange*," in which Mr. Lazarus, then as now king of the clarinet, gave a solo on that instrument. The last night of the season was set aside for the benefit of Mark Lemon, Esq., the successful author of "The M.P. for the Rotten Borough," "The Gray Doublet," "Self Accusation," "The Pacha's Bridal," etc. etc. Mr. Leffler sang "I've watched with thee;" Mr. Compton appeared as Tom Chaff in a new farce by the *bénéficiaire*, called "Sister Kate;" and "The Pacha's Bridal," "Self Accusation," and the burlesque ballet of "The Mounting Sylph," were also performed. Thus successfully ended another highly-successful season, and in the year 1839 we find my father at Drury Lane again, under W. J. Hammond's unfortunate management.

In *The Athenæum* of that year we find the following criticisms of my father's acting: "This Easter, Drury Lane is the only theatre that especially caters for Easter playgoers, with a new piece called 'The King of the Mist,' Mr. Compton as Peter Block, and Mrs. C. Jones as his termagant spouse, played their parts *con amore*." In its notice of the

performance of "Much Ado about Nothing" later in the year, *The Athenæum* says: "Poor Dowton managed to repeat the words of Dogberry; he should have changed places with Compton, who played Verges excellently well."

Accepted at once by critics and public, my father's professional prospects seemed brilliant, and only seemed, for in a short time he was thrown out of engagement by the failure of the manager, Mr. Hammond. In addition to being suddenly left disengaged, my father lost some weeks' salary, and was consequently obliged to take a compulsory holiday in the country, waiting Micawber-like for something to turn up. While consulting his agent by letter about some offer that had been made him, he received from that gentleman the following note, which states very clearly my father's position at this time and the state of affairs theatrical to which it was owing:

Agency and Post-offices,
22, Great Russell Street, Covent Garden,
16th September, 1840.

MY DEAR SIR,

In reply to yours, don't you fancy it is awkward for you to go after Mr. Rees, or Mr. Any-

one else, anywhere? My opinion is, such as it is, that you possess more *genuine* talent in your line than any other man on the stage, but extremely unfortunate events have lately operated against your good fortune since you opened in London—what with the failure of the managers with whom you have been engaged, and the decline, almost to extinction, of *legitimate* drama, for which your capabilities are most fitted. To such causes alone, unfortunate in themselves, although complimentary to your talent, is it to be attributed that you are not now a *great* London favourite. I repeat, you have been at the wrong theatres from the beginning. Take my advice, get away from London again, and look out for your return to such a theatre as the Haymarket. Don't mix yourself up with the *commonwealth* of London management any more, it injures your professional reputation. Engage with Mr. Calcraft of Dublin, a first-rate theatre at all points, where you will have a wide range of comedy suited to you, and a gentlemanly management. I expect Mr. Calcraft in town on or about the 28th (next Monday week), when I shall be happy to introduce you to him, and finally I hope make an arrangement between you. Excuse my

offering my gratuitous advice to you; goodwill and respect for your talent have dictated the liberty.

Sincerely yours,

W. KENNETH.

Mr. H. Compton, Cambridge.

This correspondence resulted in an engagement with Mr. Calcraft, and to the Royal, Dublin, my father accordingly proceeded. In this town he once more "made his wood," playing many and varied characters; and we now come to the correspondence with Macready, who desired to have him at Drury Lane. As the letters are characteristic of both gentlemen, their publication is justifiable. The first is from my father in reply to a letter from Macready, who had evidently spoken about casting him for one or two old men, a line of business my father never desired to be associated with, though he was marvellously good when he did occasionally trespass on that ground.

MY DEAR SIR,

As you alluded in your last letter to the probability of my hearing from you again before my departure, I have postponed answering that letter

till now; but as one of the characters assigned me in the list you have favoured me with involves to my mind an important question (as regards myself), I am induced to request your consideration of the nature of my understanding with your acting-manager, Mr. Serle, at the time of negotiating my engagement. In the course of conversation with that gentleman, he adverted to the possibility of some of the "old men" falling to my lot, on which he will remember I immediately declared, "that I would rather forego a London engagement altogether than undertake to play 'old men,'" and the engagement was concluded with the understanding that I was not to be called upon for that business. I was naturally surprised on the receipt of your letter to find among the parts allotted to me, Caustic, the undisputed "old man" in "The Way to Get Married." Now I will willingly play Caustic, and do my best with him, under the impression that at present you find a difficulty in casting some of your pieces, and also to prove that it is not my wish in any way to impede your efforts, but, on the contrary, to render myself available in forwarding your interests. On the other hand, I must request you will not forget the under-

standing on which my engagement was expressly made. It is not my wish or intention to attach an undue importance to the subject, but it is with me a matter of vital importance in more ways than one. In the first place, I am perfectly aware of my incapacity to embody that line of character, except in a few instances where the breadth of the character will admit of humorous treatment, but the steady, responsible "first old man" is a line that, even if I had the capability of personating, would require years of study before success could be achieved. I assure you it's not from fastidious notions that I am induced to say all this, but from a firm and grounded conviction that, in attempting that business, I shall not in reality advance your interest, and that I should most unequivocally damn my own prospects.

Yours very truly,

H. COMPTON.

5, Clarence Terrace,
Thursday Night.

MY DEAR SIR,

I begged Mr. Serle to write to you to-day on the subject of your letter, which really was

supererogatory. If you knew the care I have been taking of you in my arrangements, and the anxiety I have to make you an important consideration in the Drury Lane company, you would not show this distrust of me. It is not to my interest to do plays merely to get them done. I cannot afford to let my actors down—they must, to do well and be happy, have that confidence in me. The credit of my actors is the basis of my establishment.

Now what am I to say to you about a part I have been "measuring" for you in a play cast as no other theatre, or two theatres in England could cast it? I refer to Solus in "Everyone Has His Fault." Solus is not a young man, but calls himself an "old bachelor," though there is nothing of senility in him. Set your heart at ease that there is no purpose of making an old man of you, or of making anything of you but what you would wish to be. I write in pain and under fatigue that is pain, but I wish to set your mind at rest by writing myself.

Believe me, my dear Sir,

Very truly yours,

W. C. MACREADY.

MY DEAR SIR,

Allow me to tender you my most sincere thanks for the intentions and consideration you evince towards me in your last letter, and to assure you that as far as assiduity and application will enable me, I will endeavour to prove myself deserving of them. I hope I shall not bestow too much of my tediousness on you, if I endeavour to explain the feeling by which I was influenced in addressing my last letter to you. I am sure I need not remind you of the difference between the characters of old and middle-aged men who possess all the elements of broad and eccentric comedy, and those which necessarily involve the deportment and demeanour, and indeed a close adherence to the peculiarities of "old men," a line I cannot help thinking a study in itself.

My friend, Mr. Serle, tells me you have heard of me in old Marall and old Silky. Now I am not aware of any allusion to the age of Marall in the play, nor did I consider it necessary to make age a consideration in the delineation of the character, conceiving servility rather than antiquity the characteristic of the part. Mr. Silky

has, I confess, risen up in judgment against me before, but he fell to me among the range of parts which are termed "low comedy," and as such I endeavoured to make the most of him, without the aid of face-making, or, more properly speaking, that practice which among professional people bears a very pointed allusion to crockery-ware. But although I might have proved tolerably successful in that individual part, you will allow that the more pronounced "old men" are not consequently to fall to my lot. Besides, with Caustic I had the fear of Polonius and other responsible old gentlemen before my eyes, and on these considerations I was induced to write to you. There are many parts which in point of age might be termed old men, but which, as I said before, have all the characteristics of broad comedy. These, as a low comedian, both in town and country, I have played, and from experience fancy myself equal to, such as Dominie Sampson, Bailie Nicol Jarvie, Dogberry, etc. Solus I should be inclined to class among these non-descripts, and, from my slight acquaintance with him, I should fancy rather difficult to personate; but I shall feel great pleasure in undertaking the part, and will do my best with his particular eccentricity, and,

if I may be allowed to know anything of my own capability, I shall hope to succeed with him.

Very truly yours,

H. COMPTON.

This point being settled, we come to pleasanter material, and find Macready in the next letter asking my father's opinion on rather a delicate subject.

Private and Confidential.]

5, Clarence Terrace,
June 28, 1841.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am instructed to trouble you on a subject which is to me, and indeed to the gentleman it concerns, of much importance. It is equally our interest that I should be able to form a correct judgment as to the exact truth. I am in correspondence with Mr. ——, of the Dublin Theatre, who is desirous of trying his powers as a "light comedian" in Drury Lane Theatre. It cannot serve him, indeed it might be a serious injury to him, if I should engage him on an erroneous opinion of his talents. Will you answer me in order the following questions, to the best of your judgment?—Is he vivacious on the stage? Is he bustling? Is he light, elastic, and nimble in his

movements? Has he a hearty and a ready laugh? Has he humour? Does he make his effects with care and judgment? Does he give evidence of genius, or seem likely to do so? Or is he merely even, level, unoffending, and thus far agreeable? You will very much oblige me by helping me in your answers to these, to reach a proper conclusion.

Very truly yours,

W. C. MACREADY.

MY DEAR SIR,

Although I cannot help feeling that I incur a heavy responsibility in pronouncing an opinion on the merits of a brother-actor, I shall not shrink from performing conscientiously the duty you have imposed on me, expressing at the same time a desire that your words, "to the best of my judgment," may be understood in the most extended sense. Is he vivacious on the stage? Moderately so. Is he bustling? Yes. Is he light and elastic? Light—but scarcely elastic. Has he a hearty and ready laugh? A ready laugh. Has he humour? Not much. Does he make his effects with care and

judgment? To my thinking there is a want of study in his acting. He has some fun, which I think does not amount to enjoyment; I never saw him carried away by the exuberance of his spirits. In summing up my judgment, I cannot find terms half so appropriate or concise as your own: "He is even, level, unoffending, and thus far agreeable." I trust I have not been illiberal in forming my estimate of the gentleman's abilities, but I conceive I should be doing a serious injury, both to yourself and him, were I to give an opinion in the slightest degree opposed to my judgment, which is by no means infallible, and I could have wished a more discriminating referee had spared me this delicate task. "The faults of neighbours," etc. I have endeavoured to give an honest opinion, and will ask you to excuse any error I may have committed in stating it.

I am, my dear Sir,

Yours very truly,

H. COMPTON.

MY DEAR SIR,

I snatch a hasty moment to thank you very much and very warmly for your letter, so

valuable in its clear and lucid explanation of the merits of the gentleman about whom I troubled you. The art of acting seems at its last flicker! I fear while I dare.

Anticipating with much pleasure a mutual satisfaction in your engagement at Drury Lane,

I am, my dear Sir,

Yours obliged and very truly,

W. C. MACREADY.

The correspondence concludes with another letter from Macready, and shows that gentleman's consideration and good feeling in a case of family bereavement, namely, the death of my grandfather.

T. R., D. L.,

Sept. 17th, 1842.

MY DEAR SIR,

Upon the receipt of your letter with the sad intelligence of the loss you have been called upon to undergo, I sit down to assure you of my sincere condolence with you under such severe affliction, and to beg that you will not add to the distressing perplexities which surround you by one single thought

of anxiety upon the score of business. We will defer any rehearsal in which you may be required to Thursday, 22nd, when I hope your spirits may have so far regained their elasticity that you may be enabled to face your labours with as little pain as under these afflicting circumstances can be hoped.

With every expression of regard and sympathy, believe me,

My dear Sir,

Yours very sincerely,

W. C. MACREADY.

My father's fears were verified in respect to the "old men," and we note him playing Polonius and Sir Peter Teazle. Mrs. Nisbett was the Lady Teazle, and Macready, Joseph Surface. His Shakespearean successes here were Launce and Dogberry, both great performances.

Though they usually got on very well together, my father and Macready did not always, in the words of the former, "hit the mark," especially when Macready would try to give my father, amongst others, a lesson in acting. I remember hearing him allude once or twice to a slight discussion that took place

during the rehearsal of some piece in which my father was to play a Jack Tar. Macready sat watching one of the scenes for some time, and then stopped the rehearsal. Getting up very solemnly and deliberately, he delivered himself most impressively as follows: "Mr. Compton, I do not speak without due consideration and thought on the subject, and you will therefore excuse my saying that you have never been still for more than a minute at a time the whole of this scene." The answer was delivered just as impressively, but not exactly in the measured tones of the tragedian: "Mr. Macready, I do not speak without due consideration and thought on the subject, and you will therefore excuse my saying, Did you ever know a British sailor just come on shore after a long voyage who *could* keep still for more than a minute at a time?" The tragedian fell back, and the rehearsal continued.

In reference to the performance of "The Merchant of Venice"—in which Macready played Shylock; Phelps, the Merchant; Anderson, Bassanio; Elton, Lorenzo; Mrs. Warner, Portia; Mrs. Keeley, Nerissa; and Mr. Bennet and Mr. Compton respectively Old Gobbo and Launcelot Gobbo—the *Athenæum* says: "Mr. Bennet

and Mr. Compton were quaint without vulgarity." In October, the same journal says: "Mr. Compton as David ('Rivals') is admirable." In November "Love for Love" was played, with Mr. Nisbett as Mr. Frail, Mrs. Stirling as Mrs. Foresight, Miss Faucit as Angelica, Mrs. Keeley as Miss Prue, Keeley as Preu, and Compton as Foresight.

Macready and my father had none but professional relations. My father's independent spirit was not likely to make him a favourite with the dramatic autocrat of the day; but in justice to Macready's fairness and insight it should be stated that he invariably expressed himself in the highest terms about my father's talent. He could value a good actor at the right estimation, and knew how essential was the support of competent artists.

CHAPTER V.

Private Life—Recreation—Bodily Exercises—Variety of Tastes—Mental Recreation—Love of Reading—Professional and General Reading—London Friends—Habit of Observation.

As the object of the present book is not to give an account of my father as a public character only, but also as a private individual, some description of his bachelor life in London will not be out of place here.

When he first came to town he was naturally too much engaged professionally to have much leisure at his disposal, and moreover he had but few friends in London. Both these impediments were soon surmounted. After the first novelty of his London engagement passed, he was able to calculate how much time he could spare from his profession. His eminently social disposition, and the variety of his tastes, rapidly gained him acquaintances that soon

ripened into friendships, among fellow-actors and literary men, as well as among non-artistic people.

He lived at Stamford Street, Norfolk and Arundel Streets, the Strand, Brompton, and Knightsbridge. At this last place his rooms overlooked the park, and he always said they were the best-situated lodgings he ever had.

A tolerably accurate division of his relaxations would be to separate them into mental and physical. For the latter he was singularly well fitted, both by temperament and physique. His figure was tall and slim. He stood 5 ft. 10¼ in. without boots, and his weight rarely exceeded eleven stone. His chest measurement was exceptionally good, and he was admirably proportioned. He possessed great muscular power, which, joined to his lightness, gave him the strength of heavier men without their unwieldiness, and the activity of lighter men with more than their power. To these bodily qualifications he added a temperament of great energy, and an ardent love for all manly exercises.

It is necessary to bear in mind, while reading about the bodily pastimes of forty years ago, that they were in a very different condition to what they

are now. Athletics, both the word and the thing, were more familiar to the students of Greek national games than to the muscular Christian of 1837. Clubs for the encouragement of sports were nearly unknown. The term "gentleman amateur" had not yet become the occasion of lengthy correspondence in sporting journals; and not till a later period was the young athlete's ambition fired by the hope of earning the proud title of Amateur Champion.

Nowadays the affairs of athletic clubs are managed by zealous secretaries, devoted treasurers, and carefully-chosen committees. Far otherwise was it at the time to which I refer; indeed, it is very difficult to find much in common between the two periods, except of course a love of manly exercises. There was an almost complete absence of that associated effort which has done so much for sport, as well as for more serious affairs; the development of the joint-stock sense had scarcely advanced beyond ventures giving a pecuniary return. This, like other tendencies of the human mind, required time for its growth, though happily its advance has been singularly rapid compared with that of some other faculties, perhaps on account of its suitable "environment."

The young Englishman who wished to learn fencing then went to Angelo's rooms, or to some other noted teacher. He who wished to become a "bruiser," —a term not absolutely restricted to professionals— had to go to some successful pugilist (technically termed "pug"), who was frequently a publican, and put himself under the "pug's" hands until he was satisfied with his progress.

Amateur pedestrians were very few and far between, and as far as I know there are only isolated instances of amateurs acquiring reputation on the cinder-path. Rowing of course could be learned from the watermen or professional scullers, but rowing clubs, though fairly numerous, could not compare with their modern successors.

The best explanation of the great difference between the athletics of forty years ago and those of the present day, may be found in the greatly increased number of those who engage in them. This increase is mainly due to the modern recognition of the vast importance of physical exercise as productive of a healthy community. At the date I am writing of, sport was practically confined to two classes—the wealthy and leisured, and those who made their living out of their

skill. The professional and commercial classes, who are the backbone of modern athletics, took but little interest in sports, and it is only occasionally that we hear of individuals of these classes distinguishing themselves. A recollection of these great differences will make the succeeding pages more easily understood.

My father's pedestrian capacity has been already referred to, but he also excelled in riding, rowing, skating, and boxing. The secret of his proficiency in these sports was that of his success in his profession—a ceaseless perseverance, and a love of thoroughness. He used to be fond of saying that what was worth doing at all was worth doing well. For example, in the winter-time, when the concurrence of no rehearsal and a frost made skating practicable for him, he would go down to the Serpentine or the Long Water, and steadily set himself to learn "figure" skating. As a boy, and especially a country boy, he had early learnt "forward" skating, or "running," as it is called. When he came to skate in London he soon saw what was the best style in skating, and characteristically determined to acquire it. My father's practice was to watch a good skater very carefully for some time, and then to withdraw

to a retired spot and repeat the movements he had been watching. Neither failure nor falls deterred him; he kept at it until he had thoroughly mastered it; and thus successively acquired the "outside edge forward," "the three," "the outside edge backwards" — this he called a "teaser," and while learning it had a most severe fall — and also the "quadrille." While learning he occasionally received valuable assistance from more advanced skaters, and in his turn was always ready to give hints to beginners. Of late years he used to have quite a "connection" on the Round Pond, Kensington Gardens, and on the Serpentine among his sons' school friends, who always found their half bashful "Please, Mr. Compton, how do you do the outside edge?" or "Would you let me see you make a three?" readily responded to. He would continue to assist those who persevered, but soon lost all interest in those who "didn't stick to it." He laid great stress on the value of accurate observation of experts in this as in most other pastimes, maintaining that the principle of unconscious imitation would tend to reproduce in the learner those actions he had been following with his eye. My

father's horsemanship was somewhat rusty from disuse when he first came to London. To remedy this he set to work in his usual systematic manner. He went to the riding-school in Hyde Park, and was there thoroughly taught riding, having to ride without stirrups, on a well-worn and consequently slippery saddle, to trot without rising, to take a jump with and without stirrups. In fact he learnt all that the corporal of the school could teach him. After this, at the time of which I am now writing, the mounts given my father by his London friends, and the opportunities for riding that he had when visiting his relatives in the country, kept him in good practice. It was always his custom, in default of other means, to take half-a-dozen lessons at the riding-school before going into the country, so as to take off the stiffness which those who do not ride constantly feel at first.

During one of my father's enforced holidays he took a tour on horseback through North Devon, which he described as most enjoyable, and regretted that railways had made that form of travelling so much less practised than formerly.

In rowing he attained considerable skill, enough

to scull easily in a racing or wager boat. Under what direction or in whose company he acquired this art, I have no means of ascertaining. He took great interest in professional sculling, and saw most of the "crack" matches. Chambers and the Claspers were the foremost professionals at this time, and my father would often relate to us how he used to watch their style and try to catch it. He would often contrast the small public interest in the University Race when he was "on the river" with the modern excitement about it. He used to say that he had often been to an Oxford and Cambridge boat-race which was attended chiefly by university men, professional rowers, and the rowing amateurs of the day, the general public being scarcely noticeable. Of late years my father's engagements did not usually allow him to see the race, but on one or two occasions he went, and said that it was his opinion that the vast crowds which went to the race made the contest an excuse for a holiday, and that the number who cared about rowing was in a very small minority compared with the numbers who cared about having a pleasant day's outing.

The sport now left for discussion is that in which

my father most excelled—boxing. Boxing at that time held a much higher position than it has done, until quite recently, for many years. Its professors were many, and its disciples numerous. It was perhaps the sport most generally practised by all classes. There was nothing out of the common in gentlemen—they were not called amateurs at that time—being proficient "sparrers." Boxing pretty nearly held the place that fencing had possessed in former generations. A gentleman was as naturally expected to hold his own with the "gloves" as to be able to ride or row.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that a man so fond of athletic exercises as my father was, should have taken to boxing. The usual course was to go to some pugilist who had made a name for himself in the ring as a fighter, and out of it as a sparrer and teacher. This my father accordingly did, but I do not know who was his first instructor. At all events he went to Jem Burns, and afterwards to Young Reed. Of Reed he always spoke in the highest terms as one of the best teachers he was ever under, and most remarkable for quickness. He made great advance

under Reed's hands, which was to be expected from a man so fortunate in his physique. From Reed he went to Jem Ward, who was his last teacher. My father considered Ward the finest pugilist of his time by a long way, in proof of which he would refer to the fact that most of Ward's fights were fought and won under the twenty minutes. He practised assiduously at Ward's rooms, often sparring there every day, certainly three or four times a week. At last it was my father's privilege to spar with all comers, whatever might be their capabilities. By dint of constant practice and careful tuition he had become one of the best amateur boxers of the day, and this position he retained for many years. His style was unexceptionable. The head was held slightly back, the feet lightly but firmly planted, both hands well up and constantly moving, so that the coming blow should not be seen. He was very quick with his left, with which he did most work, reserving the right for guarding, though, on an emergency, he could "cross-counter" with his right most effectively, or use it in a rally to good purpose. He was not given to body-hitting, and on one occasion, sparred with a gallant colonel, a very

tall man and a practised body-hitter. The colonel scored on the body several times, but as he was trying to repeat the blow my father let out with the right on the nose, drawing blood so profusely that his antagonist was compelled to desist. My father early taught his boys to box, and they can all recollect how hard a hitter he was and how quick in "countering." In 1837, and for many years afterwards, the prize-ring was in a flourishing condition. Attendance at prize-fights was not restricted to sets of fast young men. Many a steady-going English gentleman thought it quite proper to see two scientific sparrers fight until the best man won. My father, as a boxer and the pupil of well-known pugilists, attended many prize-fights, usually restricting himself to see those between the best men; in so doing he did no more than his contemporaries of every station. It is unnecessary to mention in detail what contests he attended, but I may say that he was present at nearly all of Ward's, whom he thought the best man he ever saw in a ring. My father invariably maintained that the downfall of the prize-ring was due to the pugilists themselves. "Had they," he said, "kept up a high standard of

honour, they would never have alienated their supporters." The disgraceful practice of selling fights was the real cause of the decline of prize-fighting. My father did not profess to regret the extinction of prize-fights, but he thought it a pity that such a fine exercise and useful acquirement as boxing should fall into disuse, and he often hoped that boxing would some day recover the position it had lost. He lived to see his anticipations verified by the recent wonderful advance of sparring in public favour.

The physical portion of my father's recreation has now been described, and I have next to give some account of the other—the mental division.

The time that my father could spare from his vocation was little and uncertain, and had many claims on it. He had to attend to his correspondence, and his daily exercise to take, in addition to the pastimes already mentioned. There were, besides, social and family engagements that made considerable demand on his leisure.

He had no taste for card-playing; he never seemed to take any strong interest in the game. At one time he played chess fairly often, and attained some

proficiency, though he had not the thorough chess-player's absorption in the contest. For a man of his temperament there was something lacking in the science; the personal antagonism wanted life and movement, the result was too barren, and the interest it gave him was not of the nature he required when exhausted by a most trying calling. It was not that he was deficient in the power of concentration, for that he possessed in a high degree, nor was it for want of perseverance, as his success in bodily exercises shows. It was simply that chess failed to give him the relaxation most congenial to his character. The cultivation of some branch of scientific study was impracticable for my father for more reasons than one. When he was at school, and indeed until long after, science was beyond the reach of even what are termed well-educated people. The marvellous outburst of scientific activity which is the most marked characteristic of this century, and the one by which it will probably be distinguished from other ages, had not occurred when my father was at school, and was but just beginning at the time to which I refer, when the "Society for the Confusion of Useless Knowledge" had been in existence a few

years. Scientific studies were the pursuit of the few, and had but little attraction for the uninitiated, except in that peculiar form called "Recreative Science," of which the magic-lantern is a fair sample. There was, indeed, some effort among the writers for the youth of that period, to comply with the Horatian maxim, "*Miscere utile dulci.*" Their usual method was to represent the youthful characters of their works as being possessed of a most uncommon desire for scientific information. They then sent them out in the country, accompanied by a tutor. This person has never had sufficient attention bestowed on him. He was always ready to answer, out of hand, any question in any science, though physics was his *forte.* If his young friends wanted to know why the sun did not burn up the world, they were treated to a *résumé* of astronomy generally, with an excursus on the solar system in particular. He was able to answer puzzling questions about the habits of birds and animals, the nature of trees and plants, and the conformation of the earth's surface. Nor was his knowledge confined to natural phenomena; he could tell why the application of blacklead to a stove brightened it, or could

give an exhaustive account of the manufacture of pins. To these eminent and multifarious acquirements he added a stock of neatly assorted moral sentences, which he took every opportunity of using.

Whether it was due to the nature of the writer's information being distasteful to his readers, or to his manner of giving it being unhappy, or the palpable way in which the answers fitted the questions being suspicious, I do not know, but at all events he never enlisted the sympathies of his young readers, who regarded his pupils rather as victims to be pitied than fortunate beings to be envied. The author did not realise the poet's prediction, "*Omne tulit punctum*;" he gained the approval of the parents and guardians, and earned the indifference or dislike of the boys.

Works of this description have now been supplanted by manuals written by men, who combine knowledge of their subject with a faculty of clear exposition that greatly smoothes the learner's path.

Besides this want of scientific training, my father was also prevented from the study of science by the nature of his profession. If there is one distinctive feature in the actor's vocation which

separates it more sharply than any other from the ordinary occupations of men, it is its irregularity. Before a piece, new or old, is produced, there is study to be done and rehearsals to be gone through. Both these give the actor additional work, and that, perforce, in the daytime, as the evening's performance is usually going on at the time. The piece is produced, and, if successful, there is a fair prospect of immunity from work during the day for some time to come. If unsuccessful, another piece has to be substituted, involving further study and rehearsals; or the engagements of some prominent member of the company renders it necessary to withdraw the piece; or, assuming the occurrence of a still more unpleasant contingency, the manager fails to meet his obligations, and the actors are obliged to look out for other engagements. Then again, at some theatres, the programme is, or was, constantly varied, which, if it did not always entail new study, compelled the actor to be very frequently going over old parts. Science, to be studied profitably, should be studied methodically, devoting to it a certain portion of each day. Desultory effort is nearly fruitless and always involves double labour. The irregularity of the

demands which his profession makes on the actor prevents him from calculating with any certainty on his daytime, and forbids him to undertake any outside study requiring constant application.

In these circumstances there is but one form of intellectual relaxation left for him, and that is reading. Reading does not necessarily demand a previous training or special instruments or apparatus. The reader takes up his book, peruses it as long as he wishes, puts it away and resumes the perusal at the next convenient season. There is a reading for almost every mood. The reader can as easily suit the mental taste of the moment from his bookshelf as the connoisseur of wine can satisfy the demands of his palate from the cellar, and will draw a far truer solace from his books than ever was extracted from old Falernian or modern sherry.

The taste for reading, which was one of the special traits of my father's family, has already been mentioned. Though my father's fondness for reading was not shown so early as that of others of the family, it was yet very great, and, when once developed, lasted all his life.

The date of his youth and early manhood makes

it easy to guess what was his first strong literary impression. Sir Walter Scott was the author who first stirred his imagination. My grandfather read Scott's novels to his family, and in this way did my father make his first acquaintance with those creations which never lost their hold on him. He had read to him and himself read the "Wizard's" works at the time when their production, sudden and continued, had sent a thrill through all English-speaking lands. His interest in the characters of the novelist was heightened by the mystery that then surrounded their authorship. For him Sir Brian de Bois Guilbert was not only attractive in himself, but also as a creation of the great unknown. The depth of the impression made by Scott's characters on my father was shown by the pleasure with which he would recur to the time when he first knew them, and the zest with which he renewed his acquaintance. To him the author was a living power, and the pleasure he derived from his works was accompanied by a gratitude and love but seldom felt for other authors. He liked nothing better than to discuss the Waverley novels with some fellow-admirer; to contrast their favourite characters, their favourite novels; to note

the humour—kindly but shrewd; to recall the bursts of descriptive power, the study of character, and the antiquarian lore poured out so generously. He had a love so strong for the Waverley novels that he could not fix on any one among the best that he preferred to the others. His admiration for "Old Mortality" and "The Fair Maid of Perth," did not exceed his delight in "Ivanhoe" and "Guy Mannering." In fact, he did not prefer any one novel; they were all Scott's, and to Scott did he give his preference. I have sometimes thought that the intimate knowledge of these novels, and his saturation with the author's power, must have had a great deal to do with my father's success in such parts as Dominie Sampson and Bailie Nicol Jarvie, which he represented, to use a well-worn simile, as if they had stepped from the book on to the stage.

One effect of this extreme admiration was to make it very difficult to please him in fiction, as he contrasted the characters of modern novelists with those of Scott, and very often found the former unequal to the comparison.

The Waverley novels being published anonymously, they naturally gained no readers from the reputation

previously won by the author as a poet, which they certainly would have done had they come out with the name of the well-known poet attached to them.

A good proof of the popularity of Scott's works is given in the following anecdote told by Allan Cunningham to my father. At one of the literary dinners for which Holland House was celebrated, the conversation turned on Scott, and the popularity of his works. To ascertain the romance that was most liked, each guest was provided with pencil and paper, and requested to write down the title of his favourite among the Waverley novels. The papers were then opened and read. Unfortunately I do not know the novel that was most popular, but it is an interesting fact that they were all mentioned.

Scott's novels have secured many readers for his poems, but there are few among the admirers of the novels who read them from having first read his poems. Scott's poems paled their ineffectual fires at the advent of the poet whose genius, crude and irregular though it was, had yet the impulse of a truer fervour, the impress of a grander spirit. The chronicler of a picturesque feudalism could not cope with the singer through whose strains, sorrow-laden

or scorn-breathing, ran the note of the modern spirit which made its appeal with inevitable precision to a wondering world. Scott's ready acknowledgment of Byron's superiority is known to all. He ceased to write poetry, and in the new field of prose-fiction by the Waverley novels gained a new fame. The Waverley novels, the result of the author's withdrawal from poetry, have given his poems many readers. Truly, "the whirligig of time brings on its own revenges."

Byron's writings had not been to my father's youth what Scott's novels were. It was, I believe, soon after his first London engagement, that my father gave a more careful study to Byron's works. In their vigour and wit he had much pleasure; their pathos he felt most deeply; and their descriptive power came home to him, a lover of nature.

There was but one quality which prevented Byron being my father's favourite poet. The *esprit moqueur*, the sneering, gibing spirit that prompts too much of Byron's writing, received no response from the man of kindly spirit, who was wounded and shocked rather than excited and pleased by the exhibition of a mood, that seemed to him both unnatural and unmanly.

Byron's career and writings were always subjects of interest to my father, who followed most assiduously the controversy that was imprudently started some years ago by an American author. The charges then made he refused to accept on the authority of their originator, and was much gratified to find that his private judgment was supported by the able writers who defended England's poet. In one of his letters he refers to an article in the *Quarterly Review*, which was, I think, the first of the papers in that journal in defence of Byron.

The next poet I have to mention is one whose genius is in very strong contrast with that of the preceding writer.

Wordsworth and Byron, far from having anything in common, seem at first sight to be in direct opposition. They appear to be one another's contradictory. That the same mind can draw profit from both is a further proof, if any were needed, of the universality of the human spirit. It shows the weakness of one-sided writing, and the necessity of supplementing a vigorous and passionate poet by another meditative and profound. I may be pardoned for having great respect for my father's

literary taste, but for others, proofs that are unnecessary for me will be required. I think there can be no better sign of his ability for judging works of literature, and no better reason given for valuing that judgment, than his disposition to estimate every writer dispassionately, his readiness to be affected by each writer in his own way, his attitude of receptivity, if the expression be allowable. And of this his appreciation of Wordsworth is characteristic. My father read Wordsworth, as he read all but partisan writers, perfectly free from bias. In his own words, "Wordsworth was a true poet." Of course I do not quote this or any other opinions of my father as either novel or of any great critical value, but only as illustrative of his character in reference to imaginative works.

The opinions which men have of well-known authors' writings, and the degree and manner in which these affect them, form a convenient standard for estimating their mental qualities. Now Wordsworth was not the poet that would have been chosen by many people as likely to appeal to a man of my father's temperament. Therefore the fact of his having a high opinion of Wordsworth, and this, an opinion not taken

on authority, but resulting from his own perusal of Wordsworth's poems, shows the truth of what I have said above, that he was not prejudiced against writers, but formed his estimate of them from the impression made on him by their works. I do not wish it to be understood that my father was an ardent admirer of Wordsworth. That poet's genius is of the nature that inspires strong affection only in readers similarly constituted to himself. "Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart," says he of Milton; and it has been said of Wordsworth himself. Many who read him, while they acknowledge fully his poetic power, do not experience that feeling of human fellowship which some poets, Shakespeare especially, arouse in their readers' minds. The air of exalted isolation that pervades Wordsworth's poetry must always make him the poet of the few. Both his depth and the narrowness from which even he was not exempt, debar him from appealing to the widest circle. My father, then, appreciated Wordsworth, but his appreciation was rather reverence than love; and it should be borne in mind that he had not the opportunity of giving the systematic study to Wordsworth which might have made his reverence, love.

Actors are sometimes reproached with not being acquainted with the dramatic literature of their country. There is foundation for the charge. But I am happy to be able to say that this could not be said of my father. Indeed it would be strange if it were possible to say it of one who made thoroughness in his profession his chief aim. He knew well that, besides the education of the stage, there was necessary the education of the written drama. He would ask how it was possible to play legitimate parts as they should be played? Only by entering into the spirit of the times and the dramatist. And how could the actor enter into the spirit of a part without careful study of the kind of drama to which it belonged? To acquire this knowledge he devoted considerable study to the Elizabethan school of dramatists.

Of course he had not the time to study the literature of the period as minutely as those who had made it their chief object; nor was his purpose the same as theirs. It would not have benefited him as an artist to have acquired a knowledge of the minute stylistic differences of the various writers. With his purpose and his opportunities he could only

adopt the plan he chose. This plan was a selection of the writers most marked by the tone of their times, and the selection was most judiciously made. Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, and Ford in the first rank, and to them succeeded Webster and Marlowe, with portions of Greene and Dekker. Of course this choice did not aim at being exhaustive, but it did attempt to be representative, and that it may fairly be considered. To these he added the comedy writers of the Restoration. In few of these plays was it probable that he would be required to play; but he hoped, by familiarising himself with the mode of thought, the style of expression, and the code of manners belonging to the Elizabethan period, that he should be better able to interpret characters of that time in accordance with the spirit of their age. My father looked at the matter from the following point of view. "I have never pretended to look upon antiquarian knowledge as more than an adjunct, but still an adjunct of such importance that its absence may spoil, or at all events diminish the effect of a well-acted part. The actor takes as his basis the common elements of human nature—*e.g.* fear, pity, love, humour, and sorrow; but before he

distinctly portrays a character of any special era, he has to differentiate this foundation by those variations of thought and manners which distinguish that era from others. Acting, restricted to the exhibition of primary human emotions, would soon fail to attract; it is by constantly diversifying the basis, by substituting the minor types for the original, that acting secures that variety essential to its continuance. For this purpose the study of the most distinctive models is necessary for all actors." My father fully admitted that the intuitive perception of character was the especial attribute of histrionic genius. He had not much difficulty in maintaining that this intuitive faculty was strengthened by the study of other times. He always considered that the possession of genius did not exempt an actor from severe study of his art. The saying that "genius is an infinite capacity for taking trouble," was a favourite expression of my father's. He would also quote Sir Joshua Reynolds's opinion of what could be done by industry. My father's acting of Marall in Massinger's "A New Way to Pay Old Debts" is a good instance of the utility of private study. The success of this impersonation is described above. My father attributed

this success to the combination of natural powers for acting with special study of the essential qualities of that style of character.

Actors are differently situated in regard to Shakespeare than other professional men; he is even nowadays a most important element in their business life. From their necessary familiarity with the Shakespearean drama regarded as a part of their work, pleasurable—but all the same work, it is not to be wondered at if they are apt to take a too professional view of him. It is but natural that the poetical side of Shakespeare should become subordinated to the practical demands of the stage. The best actors have always maintained the faculty of seeing Shakespeare both from the actor's and the literary point of view.

It will usually be found to be the case that the actor most successful in Shakespearean parts is the one who has not allowed the professional spirit to master the artistic instinct. Now, my father's reputation was greatest in Shakespearean parts, and I may say it without injustice, he was *facile princeps* in his own line of Shakespearean comedy.

But though Shakespeare was the subject of his

professional study, his appreciation of the dramatist, viewed unprofessionally, was never dulled by use. He was as ready to re-read Shakespeare after years of professional toil as he had been in youth eager to read the prohibited book in secret. Like all actors of his time he was well up in Shakespeare, textually speaking; he could almost without exception tell what play a quotation came from and to what character it belonged. But this is a matter of mere rote, and has but little to do with a discriminating delight in an author's work. Where he was unlike all but studious actors, was in his knowledge of the sources of Shakespeare's plays, their chronology and succession, and in his desire to be acquainted with the origin and growth of the English drama.

He was especially fond of Hazlitt as a critic. He endeavoured to benefit himself by the labours of Shakespearean commentators, though the effort was somewhat severe, from these gentlemen having a fondness for far-fetched explanations and a proneness to engage in literary squabbles, more flattering to their own vanity than productive of profit to the reader.

My father's fondness for Shakespeare was a great

resource to him. It is difficult to say anything that is not already familiar about Shakespeare, the author most commented on in English literature except the Bible. Still I may mention some of my father's preferences. He placed Touchstone first among low-comedy Shakespearean parts. Then the First Grave-digger or Dogberry. He liked Autolycus very much, and regretted that he had not more opportunity of playing it. His estimate of Shakespeare for representation differed considerably from his judgment of the plays as writings. In answer to the assertion that Shakespeare's plays were avowedly written for playing, and were played in the author's lifetime, he replied that the conditions of the representations were so widely altered as to prevent the fact being any guide for modern times.

One has first to recollect that Shakespeare's time was the period in English society when the greatest number of people were able to take delight in imaginative dramatic works; besides, the theatre was the only popular source of intellectual enjoyment. The theatre served the purpose of novel, poem, newspaper, history, and comic paper all in one. The performances took place in the daytime, and

attendance was a daily habit, or nearly so, with all classes. The manner in which theatre-going is regarded in France in the present day is a fair parallel of this state of audiences. Going to a theatre in France is considered as an ordinary event demanding no special preparation. There is nothing of the nature of a fête or treat about it; it is as natural to go to the theatre as to go for a walk, very much more so for most Frenchmen, whose walk is rarely more than a promenade. My father did not say that regular playgoers have not existed to a considerable extent in England since the time of Shakespeare, but that they only existed as a class. The habit of theatre-going might, he thought, advantageously become more general. "Had we," my father would say, "the regular attendance they have in France, it would be of great benefit to audiences and to actors also. The public taste would become more severe, and the actors, knowing they had to deal with a critical and qualified audience, would be less likely to sacrifice their art to a desire for applause."

This opinion will account for my father preferring for acting those plays of Shakespeare in which the dramatic element is stronger than the poetic. One

cannot expect a modern audience, unaccustomed to poetical plays, to appreciate "A Midsummer Night's Dream" as did the Elizabethan playgoers, since most of the plays that they saw were poetical to some extent, the best being highly imaginative. That there was bombast and revolting incidents in the plays of some of Shakespeare's contemporaries and successors he admitted, but did not consider that this prevented them appreciating poetical plays better than modern audiences. My father did not approve of the effort to carry out the fairy element in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" by mechanical contrivances. "You lose," he said, "the poetic spirit as you try to convey its effect by lime-light, by gorgeous scenery, or by any other perceptible material means. The poetry of such a play is best perceived by the mental eye, material media are too gross to convey it, and they but crush the idea they would interpret. What scenic or mechanical adjuncts had they in Shakespeare's times?" In the same manner my father thought that the practice of using Shakespeare's plays as an opportunity for elaborate spectacular displays a mistake; such spectacles drew the attention of the audience to what was important

certainly, but not primary; accessories should not be made into essentials, nor should time and skill be lavished on the frame to the neglect of the canvas. The setting should not surpass the gem. "Richard III.," "Hamlet," "Othello," "Macbeth," "The Merchant of Venice," "As You Like It," and "Much Ado about Nothing," were the plays he thought best fitted for representation.

I have given space to this question, as I know that the opinion of a legitimate actor will have both authority and interest for the lovers of Shakespeare, whether they prefer the poet or the dramatist.

My father was quite as well acquainted with Milton's works as most men who do not make English literature a special study. Every educated person is supposed to have read "Paradise Lost;" but it is probable that in that case, as in many others, the supposition is more in favour of the educated person than is the reality. My father had read "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained," as well as "Comus," "Samson Agonistes," and the better known shorter pieces; in fact my father had read Milton as he read other poets in the course of reading he undertook for the purpose of knowing the

works of England's most celebrated writers. He, in common with many others, preferred the shorter poems to "Paradise Lost," which he thought too long for a poem of its solemn character. "It owed its reputation," he said, "rather to the beauty and force of detached passages than to the interest of the plot or the harmony and proportion of the whole."

It would be foreign to the object of this memoir to devote space that has other claims to a detailed examination of my father's reading in English classical literature; moreover, with but few exceptions, the necessary minuteness of information is wanting. I must therefore not attempt to do more than briefly survey the remaining poetical reading of my father at this time.

I have omitted to mention that my father took great delight in Shakespeare's sonnets.

To Chaucer and other English poets he had not given much attention. He had, I believe, only read portions in what is called modernised language, and of course lost all the distinctive beauties of these poets' style, though even the translators could not crush out Chaucer's kindly wit and delight in nature.

Had the facilities which now exist for studying

these poets been at my father's command, he would not have neglected to avail himself of them. Spenser's "Faery Queen" he had read as a matter of duty; and though he would sometimes affect to pride himself on having read what few people, especially at that time, did more than talk of, he, a lover of poetry, cannot have failed to find the perusal, conscientiously undertaken, repaid by an intellectual enjoyment as fresh and distinctive as any to be gained in English literature.

With the exquisite lyrics, gems of tender feeling in fanciful settings, of Herrick, Waller, Lovelace, and their rivals or successors, my father was familiar. He would frequently read them again, and always said they never lost their freshness. He was, besides, a warm admirer of Pope—not that he claimed for him the highest place in poetry, but that he felt the charm of his knowledge of the world, and the dexterity with which he wielded his verse. He enjoyed with great zest the merciless but well-deserved sarcasm of "The Dunciad," as well as the ingenuity of "The Rape of the Lock," or the concise wisdom of the "Essay on Man." Cowper he had read, but I cannot say that he was particularly fond of this poet's somewhat plodding

Pegasus. Burns he liked very much. His humour, pathos, and keen delight in all Nature's moods came home to my father. "Burns," he said, "always seemed to me to write poetry as if he was but obeying the needs of his nature." He thought that the Low-land dialect of Burns lessened the number of his readers. Southey he had read considerably. He did not find Southey's poetry very much to his taste, and thought that it wanted concentration, and that there was a great deal of versification to a small quantity of poetry.

For Coleridge he had a genuine and hearty love. I can well recollect my father reading to us "Love," and never before had I felt the full beauty of that wonderful composition. My father was an almost faultless reader, and he brought home to us on that occasion the poet's idea with irresistible force. In all Coleridge's poems—they are but few—he delighted, but "Love" was his chosen favourite. My father had not read Shelley or Keats to any great extent. At the time to which I now refer, the appreciation of these poets was restricted to a small circle, and their names were not familiar to the general reading public. When, in later years, the recognition

that their merits deserved was given them, my father had not the leisure for reading them. Another instance of my father's catholic taste in literary matters is the high opinion he had of Crabbe. Though but little read by the present generation, Crabbe's merits are admitted by all competent judges. My father thought that he ranked among the highest of the poets of his style. He preferred "The Parish Register" and the "Tales of the Hall" to Crabbe's other works, but he read all of them with great pleasure.

Having given some account of my father's reading in poetry, I have next to do with his principal prose-reading, and I shall refer to the authors in chronological order.

Fielding comes first in date, and in his position of the greatest English novelist. My father had read "Joseph Andrews," "Amelia," and "Tom Jones." With all of these he was greatly charmed. In Fielding's clear good sense, wit, and knowledge of the world, in his courage and integrity, there was something especially attractive to my father. There was that similarity of mind between them which secures for the author a sympathetic reader. My father's favourite was "Tom Jones"—"that exquisite

romance of human manners"—for which preference he has the authority of most critics, though, as I have said before, his opinions were not adopted in deference to authority.

Fielding's contemporary and rival, Smollett, my father had read about the same time. "Roderick Random," "Peregrine Pickle," and "Humphry Clinker," he admired and enjoyed thoroughly. But he had not the same degree of admiration for Smollett that he had for Fielding. Smollett he considered the coarser author of the two, and greatly inferior to his rival as a novelist. He was wont to say that Smollett's humour was broader and less true to life than Fielding's. "Besides," he said, "you miss in Smollett those pointed, quaint, and truthful reflections that Fielding intersperses throughout his novels; not that the reflections are wanting in Smollett, but that they are neither so amusing nor humorous."

"Tristram Shandy," he said, he had enjoyed at first reading as much as any novel he ever read. My father's instinctive abhorrence of sentiment and affectation, which was most strong, makes it impossible that his enjoyment in Sterne's work could have proceeded from the sentimental portion of "Tristram

Shandy." But there is another quality nearly as prominent, and that is humour, and humour of a kind so English and genuine that, despite all affectations, all tricks, it has kept alive Sterne's fame till the present time. And it was this humour that appealed most directly to my father, a man whose appreciation and delight in real humour was most intense, keen, and unrestrained. Of Sterne's sentimental delinquencies he was an unsparing critic; but on the other hand, unlike some critics of Sterne, he admitted or rather claimed for him a humour as rare and true as that of any English novelist.

From the authors I have just mentioned, my father said he had gained a most vivid and, he believed, accurate notion of the habits, manners, and thoughts of those times. On this account, apart from their imaginative qualities, he considered the perusal of these works most important. Among memoirs and biographies, I must mention Boswell's "Johnson," Horace Walpole's "Letters," and Pepys's "Diary." Of Johnson, like the majority of his countrymen, he had read little but what Boswell includes. He knew Johnson as a man, but as an

author he had not studied him; and, if Macaulay may be followed, his loss was not serious.

Southey's prose works he preferred to the poems. He was very fond of "The Doctor," a work comparatively unknown to the general reader nowadays. Southey's "Life of Nelson" was one of his favourite books. Besides the Waverley novels, my father had read Scott's "Tales of my Grandfather," biographies, and periodical criticisms. De Quincey's "Confessions of an Opium Eater" my father had read, and often said that he was never so affected by the force and descriptive power of language; he said that the impression on him was so vivid as to be painful. In the Essays of the "Gentle Elia," he found matter most congenial to his tastes, especially as the author was an enthusiast about the old actors, and could describe them with marvellous felicity. Lamb continued to be a favourite author of my father throughout his life. "Elia," indeed, was often the companion whose quiet humour and pleasant description of scenery and people lessened the tedium of the railway journeys my father was frequently obliged to make in later years.

Among dramatic critics I must name Hazlitt and

Schlegel especially. The list of Shakespearean critics is so long that it would be weariful to detail it, and the two mentioned will show that my father read both kinds of criticism. He had a very high opinion of Hazlitt both in dramatic and general literature, and read his other works very assiduously. His historical reading included Gibbon, Arnold, Rollin, and Hume, besides smaller works. For the late Professor Smyth's works he had great reverence. Smyth's "Lectures on the French Revolution" was his authority for that period. Though metaphysics was not a branch of study that he professed much aptitude for, he thought it necessary to become acquainted with the rudiments of moral philosophy, and with this object he had read the "Sedgwick Discourses," Whewell's "Moral Philosophy," and portions of Dugald Stewart's philosophical writings. He did not pursue this division of study very long, as it was a kind unsuited to his mental formation. The subtleties and refinements of metaphysical discussions were not particularly agreeable to a man who preferred above all things simplicity and directness of thought and expression. It was during this time that my father read the earlier works of Lytton.

He preferred the historical novels to those of the "Paul Clifford" style, which he would describe as of the Newgate Calendar order. "The Last Days of Pompeii" and "Pelham" were especial favourites of his. He found matter more congenial in the later works of this novelist, but he did not read them till long after this time.

Of my father's social pleasures I can only speak in the most general terms, as there are no written memorials of this period of his life, and scarcely any of the companions of his early London career have survived him. As a young London actor, successful in his profession, and gentlemanly in his private capacity, he soon obtained introduction; and his tact, good-nature, and conversational powers quickly made him sought after. But evening *réunions* always clash with an actor's business, though he could go out after the performance, and did to some extent; yet my father always placed so high a value on early hours that he did not avail himself of half the invitations given him.

From his profession he had every opportunity of associating with the other artists of pen, brush, or song. In his early London time he knew most of

the leading journalists, some of them being his intimate friends. Among others he knew Douglas Jerrold, Laman, Blanchard, the A'Becketts, and the Mayhews; and with the late Mark Lemon he renewed a country friendship that had begun many years before. My father was a member of several of the literary clubs, where he met most of the well-known characters of that period. I believe it was about this time that my father joined the honourable society of Buffaloes, and though he was never an active member, he made it a rule to maintain a most impressive solemnity when Buffaloism was talked of. The only information about this mystic society to be obtained from him was the interesting fact that Adam was the first Buffalo; beyond this he would never enlighten the irreverent curiosity of non-Buffaloes.

His characteristic desire to see everything worth seeing, joined to his theory that actors should know every type they might be called upon to play, caused him to see the night-side of London. This he accomplished very appropriately, under the guidance of a friendly police inspector, who took him on his rounds in the most interesting, and also the most criminal, parts of the West End.

By the same means he was enabled to see the notorious portions of the east of London. He went to Ratcliff Highway and the neighbourhood one night with two police-officers; and even in their company the visit was not without danger, as at this time Ratcliff Highway bore a name as bad as it was well-deserved. But this element of peril was not likely to affect my father, to whom it gave additional zest in the adventure. Still, though he had taken care to go to the East End, he gained most of his knowledge of low life from the West End of course, because it was so much more accessible. By these opportunities he had been enabled, to use his own words, "to take stock of" the occupants of licensed lodging-houses and sailors' lodging-houses, the frequenters of thieves' kitchens, and the inhabitants of the Jewish quarters. He was ever on the alert, when out in the streets, to seize the opportunity for observing any "character" in the way of hawker, Cheap Jack, or purse-trick man, particularly if he had a good "patter." At this time there were still gaming-tables in London, and my father, through the interest of a friend, attended them pretty often, solely with a professional object. I need scarcely say that gambling had no attraction

for him. Never was there a man less imbued with the fatal passion for play. Being so situated, he was able to watch the scene closely and dispassionately. His habit of patient observation was not confined to the criminal or dissipated classes; he admitted the claims of the ordinary Philistine; but then the Philistine must possess some eccentricity of gait, some peculiarity of gesture, or some oddity of speech which would repay observation. Very little of use to the actor was to be got out of the average respectable passenger of the London streets.

In society my father would take quiet notice of anything that struck him as likely to be useful; but he refrained from reproducing the peculiarities of his friend or intimates, or those of an original who was likely to be recognised. He used his knowledge very carefully, so that it was difficult to think of the peculiarities without thinking of the character which they illustrated. It may be thought that close observation of criminals and street pedlars is lowering to the artist; my father considered that truth was of paramount importance in every impersonation. He judged it his duty to make himself acquainted with as many varieties of human nature as he possibly

could, however distasteful the subject might be. He placed great reliance on the accurate observation of variations from the ordinary run of men; but it must not be supposed that he wished to represent mankind as composed exclusively of eccentricities. Far from it. He cordially agreed with the American humorist who says that there is a good deal of human nature in most men. But in my father's line —low comedy—the impersonation of an ordinary individual would be fruitless. The low comedian has not the chance of employing the strongest emotions of man's nature; it is therefore necessary, if he wishes to interest the audience, to individualise the character by personal traits that will make him at once original and amusing. This is not to be done by a mere catchword or the repetition of a gesture, but by presenting the character as if his peculiarities were the result of natural growth, and the outcome of a mind different in some way or another from that of every-day people.

My father, and indeed most of his family, were very fond of exchanging pleasantries, and so constant was the habit of humorous conversation that it was sometimes very difficult to know what was serious

and what fanciful. An amusing illustration of this occurred shortly before my father's marriage. He was bidding good-bye to a friend who called on him at his rooms, and, as his friend was going downstairs, my father said carelessly: "By-the-bye, S——, I am going to be married to-morrow." "Indeed!" said S——, thinking it to be another piece of chaff. "I am very glad to hear it." "It's a fact, I assure you," said my father. "Oh yes, I know," responded his friend; "I hope you will like it." And thereon they parted. The next time he met his friend S—— his marriage was well known, and S—— complained of not having been told of it, and was very disgusted when he was reminded of their last conversation, and the manner in which he had received the news. "Why, I thought you were chaffing!" he exclaimed. "Never was more serious in my life," said my father.

CHAPTER VI.

Liverpool—Dublin—At the Princess's and Olympic—The Strand—His Marriage—Removal to Kensington—Haymarket Engagements.

At the termination of Macready's Drury Lane management, my father could not obtain any London engagement; despite his most strenuous efforts, he was unsuccessful. It is no exaggeration to say that at the present time there are crowds of actors and actresses unable to get engagements. They have the consolation, poor though it be, of knowing that their situation is by no means unprecedented. The precariousness of the theatrical profession has been felt by its members for so many years that it has become proverbial. This uncertainty is to some extent inevitable.

Commerce and the professions connected with it are regulated by economical laws, and on conformity with or violation of these laws depends the prosperity or stagnation of these pursuits. The operation of

these laws is not diminished by their being violated unconsciously; but their recognition, though of course it does not modify them, may be followed by good results if it lead to the adoption of a trading system in accordance with them. The parallel case of the physical laws is almost identical. Natural laws have been and are broken with terrible consequences; but the violation of a particular manifestation of natural law is limited to that instance. The operation of the law is as invariable as ever; but from the discovery of these laws and from the recognition of their constancy, most beneficial results have followed. When men have learned to work in harmony with Nature, instead of in opposition to her, a great step has been made. In political economy a similar conformity is equally rewarded. When the trading classes find that over-production results in glutted markets, and reckless speculation in financial collapse, they have the fruit of their folly and greed brought home to them very forcibly.

It cannot be denied that the artistic professions are also subject to economical laws; but there are many causes which tend to make these laws felt indirectly rather than immediately. As society is

now constituted, all fine arts are luxuries, not necessaries. With the theory that art, rightly regarded, is as indispensable as any material necessity of life, I cannot deal. Society has hitherto declined to adopt that view, and I must confine myself to the actual state of affairs. Formerly, artists worked under patronage. To the liberal and sympathetic patrons of past time we owe those grand achievements of art which are the models of every true artist. Still, though patronage produced great good, it also produced not a little evil. It tended to make artists subservient, to aim rather at pleasing their patron than pursuing art rigorously. Its effects on the literature of this country were as pernicious as could be.

These evils led to the separation of the artist and the patron. From the abuse of patronage came the freedom of the artist. Artists believed that they could calculate on the appreciation of their independent labours by appealing directly to the widest circle of judges. In the main this belief has been proved correct. In some cases the appeal to large classes of ignorant and fashionable people has resulted in lowering the artist himself; but there can be no

doubt that the change has been one of immense benefit both to art and artists.

This change had another and very important effect. Art was now pursued as a means of livelihood, and in a much greater degree than it ever had been before. Of course in classical and mediæval times artists had made their living by their skill, but the number of those who depended on art for their daily bread was very scanty compared with their modern successors. In the middle ages the difference was exceptionally great. To the Church we owe some of the greatest works of that time. The triumphs in stone that are the delight of the connoisseur and the puzzle of the tourist are due to the genius of the mediæval priest. The cloister has produced masterpieces of painting and marvels of illumination. The art of the Church was not pursued for art's sake, but for the glory of the Church, and sought no material recompense. The secular artist had but little anxiety about his material welfare; safe in the protection and bounty of a generous patron, he was able to devote himself to his art without the wearing knowledge that his daily bread depended on his exertions. For the modern artist who lives by his art, life is a struggle that has

but one end; thousands struggle and succumb where units succeed; they have no knowledge of the laws of distribution, and could not apply it if they possessed it. The pictures without purchasers, the manuscripts without publishers, and the statues that only adorn their creators' studios, are the grim facts which tell the artist that the world has enough of art for the time. In times of commercial depression the artistic professions are the first to suffer; art can be better done without than food, and pictures than clothing. Besides, the mutability of public taste has to be considered. Novelty is the magnet that draws the pleasure-seeker; the artist will work unnoticed by the imitative crowd that now throngs the auction-rooms, eager for *faïence* or "old Chelsea;" that now fills its drawing-room with the grotesque production of Japan; or sacrifices its comfort for the possession of furniture better fitted for torture than use. The spiritualist that converses with the shades of being that never existed, and the manager that provides a florid spectacle, will reap a plenteous harvest, while the theatre that plays a legitimate drama or an ingenious comedy will show "a beggarly array of empty benches." From such causes comes the

uncertainty of all artistic vocations, especially of acting.

After having given years to country practice and much thought to his art, and above all after having acquired fame in London, my father found it absolutely impossible to get employment in London. Deep and bitter was the disappointment. The impression made by this blow was never effaced, and he always mourned the precariousness of his profession. "I never feel safe," he would say in after-life when he had a wife and a large family dependent on him. So uncertain did he think the profession that he would never advise anyone to enter it. He obtained an engagement at "The Royal," Liverpool, then under the management of Mr. Benjamin Webster.

It was here that he renewed his acquaintance with my mother, then Miss Emmeline Montague, who was the leading actress of the establishment, and the result was another engagement, but this time of a private nature. As I may not have another opportunity of alluding to my mother, and as I know there will be many of my readers who would object (though she might desire it) to have her name passed over, let me briefly state that she is the daughter of the first

light comedian of his time, Mr. Henry Montague, who, from his long and honourable association with the theatre at Bath, got the title of "Bath" Montague. His great talents were universally admitted; and many will still remember his William ("Black-Eyed Susan"), supposed to be equal to T. P. Cooke's; his Mercutio, Charles Surface, Young Marlow, Romeo, Benedick, Captain Absolute, Rover, and a hundred other characters. Had his modesty permitted him to visit London, he would doubtless have made his mark there; but the above virtue, and the burden of a numerous family, kept him in the provinces, where his position was assured. He was not only a great actor and a true gentleman, but he was a capital companion, and many of his sharp retorts and smart sayings are still repeated.

When playing in Burton, a gentleman of the same name as that town happened to be in the company. Taking a walk with a friend one day, Mr. Montague remarked some of the gentlemen of the company embarking in a small boat, to take a little excursion up the river, Mr. Burton amongst the number. "Quite right," said Mr. Montague as the latter gentleman took his seat; "just as it should be: Burton-

on-Trent!" His pleasant way of alluding to "strolling players" is well known to many an old actor. He would not hear them called by the name I have written, but insisted on christening them "Arabs," and the booths they played in he termed "tents." Strolling in the outskirts of some small town with a companion one morning, they encountered one of these gentlemen, evidently just arrived. There was the unmistakable sword in the unmistakable covering, there were the regulation bundle and newspaper parcels, and the possessor of these much-used "props." stood before them in the long seedy coat of the period, and the black hat (with the brim turned up all round and looking like a turban) then in vogue; altogether a strange figure. "This is no common wanderer," said Mr. Montague to his companion; "this is not the usual 'Arab;' this must be one of the leaders of the 'caravan,' doubtless some great chief!" He was not very wrong, for the individual turned out to be the new "leading man."

Miss Montague, after an unusually hard apprenticeship in the provinces, made her *début* in London as Juliet, under Hammond's management at Drury Lane, at the end of 1839, my father appearing as the

Apothecary. Few, who witnessed it, will have easily forgotten her beautiful performance of this character, acknowledged on all sides to be one of the sweetest and most captivating renderings ever witnessed. Indeed, an experienced critic and dramatic author told the writer, only the other day, that he should always remember Emmeline Montague as the most "charming" actress he ever saw. My mother played the same character in 1840, at Covent Garden, then under the management of Madame Vestris, the piece being revived by command of the Queen for one of Charles Kemble's farewell performances; Anderson was the Romeo, and Kemble the Mercutio. After her marriage, she went on a short tour with Charles Dickens's well-remembered company, comprising many of the staff of "Punch," and termed the "Literary Guild;" but after that she contented herself, at my father's wish, with the duties of a wife, and has been as bright an ornament and as devoted a worker in that retired position as she was in the excitement of that stage-life which she so highly adorned.

The project of the Guild of Literature and Art was first broached at Knebworth in 1850, Lord—then Sir Edward—Lytton being one of the chief promoters.

For this society he wrote the comedy of "Not so Bad as We Seem," which was first produced at Devonshire House, in the presence of Her Majesty and Prince Albert. The male characters were filled by gentlemen of eminence in literature and art, and my mother was the original in the lady-juvenile part. It is noticeable that the ladies' parts in this comedy are very slight. Lord Lytton explained to my mother that, when he wrote them, he did not know they would be played by professional ladies, or he would have made them stronger. All the male parts were very good; they were played by Dickens, Forster, Jerrold, Knight, and Frank Stone.

The company included the following names, celebrated in different departments of art: Charles Dickens, whom my father considered the only amateur actor that he could expect to succeed as a professional, and Mr. Mark Lemon, the well-known editor of "Punch;" Mr. Topham and Mr. F. Stone, the artists; Douglas Jerrold, wit, novelist, and dramatist; Costello; Egg, another famous artist; Forster, the biographer; and Cruikshank and Tenniel, the engravers and caricaturists. Among the ladies were Miss E. Montague, Miss A. Romer, and Mrs. Alfred

Wigan. In public fame this company possessed great strength. Provincial people, who had but few opportunities of seeing these London celebrities, were eager to use their chance. They were not apt to criticise the dramatic efforts of this company when their chief pleasure was to see the creator of Sam Weller and Fagin; the director of "Punch," the most effective and popular comic paper ever produced in this country; Jerrold, the wit, whose contributions to "Punch" had given fame to himself and subscribers to the paper; and the artists, whose glowing canvas, "though lost to sight," had left impressions "to memory dear." But even if the public had been critical, they could not have found much fault with the members of the company, viewed as amateur actors. They were very much above the average of "amateurs," and, from constantly playing together, worked with an ease and union which much improved their representations. In their chief, Charles Dickens, they possessed an amateur who, in the opinion of competent judges, would have made, on the boards, a name as great as that which he had gained with the pen.

The tour of this amateur dramatic company was a great pecuniary success. From some unfortunate

causes, the objects of the Guild of Literature and Art were not effectually promoted. The guild never had that effect on the country which the brilliance and prominence of its promoters and supporters and its great success at first might have seemed to ensure; a failure the more to be regretted since there are few countries where the influence of such a society could be of greater value than in our own.

My father made his first appearance before a Manchester audience with this company in the part of Master Slender. He played but one night, and though he was unknown, his "reception was tremendous;" his rendering of the part was the theme of general praise for many days after. My mother played Mrs. Ford that night.

After leaving Liverpool, my father went to play a season's engagement at Dublin. This was not the first time he had been to Ireland. During his country apprenticeship he had played at Dublin and Cork, in both towns in company with Mr. Chute. With his usual fortune he became a great favourite. In Dublin, where he played for a season, the Irish audiences rated him very highly, and it was owing to his popularity that he escaped those pieces of unflattering

advice which the Dublin "boys" are noted for bestowing. As a rule these humorous exclamations are reserved for the unpopular, the Irish having a pretty accurate discernment of dramatic ability. In Cork he only played a short starring engagement in conjunction with Mr. Chute. At one rehearsal they met a member of the local company who afterwards attained a high position in the profession. They were rehearsing a farce in which occurs the greeting, "Ah my Bacchante, my Euphrosyne." This gentleman suppressed the final syllable in each case. The "stars" disapproved of this novel pronunciation, and my father politely pointed out the error. Great was their disgust when the actor made the same mistake at night. Considering the case hopeless, they left the gentleman to continue his torture of language unchecked. While the two friends were in Ireland together, they were accustomed to go out sailing, and being known to the boatmen often went without any attendant. On two occasions they were nearly drifted into the open sea; and, as it was, they had got so far out that it was some hours before they reached the harbour. The excessive hunger they felt was quite sufficient to give them an idea of the privations of

shipwreck strong enough to prevent their running the risk a third time. When they returned on the second occasion, Mr. Chute said to my father, "It's really frightful to think of the narrow escape the world has had of losing two promising actors." "Yes," said he, "and how frightful it is to think that the world would not have known its loss." In Dublin my father met his early comrade, Mr. R. Romer, better known to his fellow-actors as "Bob" Romer, who had just made his first appearance in Dublin. In return to my father's inquiry as to his success, he answered in his sententious style, and in theatrical phrase, "More wood has been made in a night." To render the expression intelligible to the unprofessional, I must explain, that "to make wood" is to succeed. Mr. Romer was one of those comedians who are much more diverting off the stage than on.

His solemnity and quaintness, which would set a roomful of his brother-actors into roars of laughter, were, unfortunately for him, not so effective with the public. Many were the "good" stories connected with this genial actor. If an explanation of his want of success with the public be required, it may be

found in the hypothesis that his humour was too individual or egoistic to be adapted to special parts. It is well known that this peculiarity is of not unfrequent occurrence, and it accounts for the failure as actors of many men who have made great private reputations as amusers. My father was on one or two occasions the object of Irish wit. One day as he was walking along he slipped and nearly fell; an Irish working-woman, who was passing at the time, looked at him most roguishly and said: "But I was looking at ye, or ye'd have been down." On another occasion he was well "sold" by a handsome Irish girl, who fixed her eyes on him and said: "Bless the eyes that's a-lookin' at ye," burst into a ringing laugh and departed.

At the time of my father's second visit, he regularly frequented the excellent baths on the Liffey, with which he had become acquainted when he was in Dublin before. The attendant who waited on him was a good specimen of Irish character. Many are the stories we have heard of this amusing fellow, but they require the assistance of brogue and facial expression. He was much struck by my father's persistent attendance at the baths throughout a severe winter. One

morning there had been a slight fall of snow, the first of the season, and my father observed that "winter seemed to be putting on his great-coat." Pat was delighted with this fancy. Next morning the snow was nearly a foot deep. My father duly appeared, and Pat, with a broad smile on his good-natured face, exclaimed: "Sure, sorr, and winter's *got* on that top-coat ye was a-spakin' of." On his last visit, my father rewarded his amusing attendant with a more liberal gratuity than Pat was accustomed to, and in return he was presented with a genuine "shillelagh" cut by Pat himself in a neighbouring wood, accompanied by the hope "that it would not be long before his honour came to Dublin again, for he'd be mighty plased to see him." The following correspondence gives the negotiations which led to my father's return to London:

Princess's Theatre, 21st Sept. 1844.

MY DEAR SIR,

There can be no mistake, you shall have first low comedy, and I will speak to the best authors to write something good for you. Let me know the time you can begin here. The six weeks will bring

it to the second week in November; suppose we say Monday, November 11th?

Yours truly,

J. M. MADDOX.

So on November 11th he reappeared in London —this time at the Princess's Theatre—where he remained for four years, playing Touchstone for the first time in London, besides the whole round of the legitimate drama, with Macready, Fanny Kemble, and Miss Cushman as the "stars." The company included Fred. Vining, Barratt, Conway, and Davenport; the three last-named eventually migrated to America. My mother was also in the company, and, strangely enough, was called upon to play Helen to my father's Modus. Their engagement being pretty well known by this time, the love-making scenes that constitute the underplot of "The Hunchback" had a peculiar significance, and perhaps never went so well. Maddox and my father got on capitally. I remember an anecdote the latter used to tell of the former, which is worth repeating. On one occasion my father happened to be asking (actor-

like) for an advance of salary; Maddox (manager-like) did not respond, and commenced to laugh it off. "Now what do you want with more money—a careful, industrious, steady fellow like you?" said he. "Ah!" replied my father, taking up the strain, "that's it; I'm so good that I always pay my bills weekly, and they're anything but light ones, I can tell you. As for my washerwoman, her demands are so heavy that it's absolutely necessary for me to look about me." In due time, I believe, the salary question was settled; but Maddox did not forget the circumstance, and, catching sight of my father some time afterwards, when they happened to be far removed from each other, on a Thames steamboat, he called out to him at the top of his voice, to the great amusement of the passengers and supreme disgust of my father: "Ah Compton! how's your washerwoman? *Heavy* as ever, eh?"

In 1847, I read in some old letters before me, that Charles Mathews was his next "tempter." I take up the correspondence with a letter from Mathews, by which it will be seen that there have been other letters preceding it.

Mackay's Hotel, 91, Prince's Street, Edinburgh,
May 12th, 1847.

MY DEAR SIR,

I should be very sorry to "tempt" you away from any house by the offer of higher terms, particularly from one where you express yourself to be so comfortable, and the leaving which, you say, would render you liable to the reproaches of your friends for quitting what is reduced to a "certain income." I should not have ventured to propose an engagement but that I had always understood you to say that you desired to join us at any time that we might resume management. However, I do repent me of my rashness, and pocket the rap on the knuckles you have given me with becoming humility. That you are about to re-engage with Mr. Maddox for —— pounds, but will not come to us under two more, is a compliment there is no mistaking; and if you prefer the "Jew," as you call him, I can only regret that I should have given you any trouble on the subject.

I need not touch on the point of "business," under these circumstances; but will merely remark

that, even had you been willing to exchange the "Jew" for the "merchant," I could not have promised that the first business should be left to "us twain," since I hope to have (and, indeed, I may say I have) two or three more, both eccentric and low comedians in the company; being of opinion that it is very bad policy to have only one person in each department, and detrimental to the interests of all theatres to see the same person playing everything.

In conclusion, I will only ask one favour—yes, I will—I'll ask two. The first is that you do not mention our communications to Mr. Maddox, as I should not like him to think that I had been trying to "decoy" away his people; and next that, though we are not to meet as manager and actor, we may always regard each other in the same spirit of good fellowship we have ever done; and some day, when you are less fortunately situated, there may be a chance of our meeting again. With Mrs. M.'s best remembrances,

Believe me, faithfully yours,

C. J. MATHEWS.

This is answered by a very unmistakable letter

from my father, which, after some preliminary matter, goes on thus :

"You seem to be hurt at my asking you two pounds more than Maddox. Is that so very heinous a crime ? It is no more than others have asked and received. Can you see no reason or justice in such a proposition ?—when the notoriously low scale of salaries at the Princess's, and the acknowledged liberality of your former management are considered, surely my demand was not so very exorbitant ? The fact of Maddox keeping open his theatre all the year, whilst others make at most a ten-months' season, brings my monstrous demand to much the same total at the end of the year. But the crowning injustice of your letter, is your assertion that I would not come to you under —— pounds. I should like to know in what part of my letter that is to be found. So far from that, I plainly told you what I asked Maddox, and left it to you to make me an offer above that sum, putting —— pounds as the outside, to give you some notion of what I expected. This will not admit of being twisted into the interpretation of a rude demand for nothing less than —— pounds. I don't know why

you should caution me against acquainting Maddox with our correspondence, any more than you should others whom you will naturally 'decoy' away. I shall be always happy to retain the same feeling of good fellowship towards you that I have always flattered myself existed between us. But I am a plain man, as Mrs. Mathews knows (*vide* 'speaking likeness'), and I like plain dealing, and you must excuse my saying I have not met with it in our recent correspondence, or I could not be charged with the extremely bad taste of putting a slight upon you when talking matters of business.

Yours truly,

H. COMPTON."

The correspondence concludes with a most characteristic epistle from Mathews:

York, June 13th, 1847.

MY DEAR COMPTON,

When people begin to write "smart" letters to each other, the best thing they can do is to stop short in time. This I have done, but I don't yet give up the hope of our understanding each other when we

meet, which I hope we shall do next week, as I count on being home about Tuesday. I can't afford in these hard times to lose the good company and good opinion of one of the few pleasant fellows, admirable actors, and gentlemen that are left to our poor profession. Smoke that.

Mrs. M.'s best remembrances, and the cordial good wishes of yours ever faithfully,

C. J. MATHEWS.

This soft answer had the effect of turning away wrath, and the mutual good feeling that was between them existed to the last. Indeed, I have often listened to my father speaking in high terms of Mathews, and on the other hand, have spent some very pleasant half-hours in the latter's society, when my father has formed the topic for conversation and admiration. So my father was not decoyed away after all, but stayed with Maddox until he went to join old Farren at the Olympic, accompanying that gentleman to the Strand when the former house was burnt down. During the latter occurrence, my father, having reached the theatre for the purpose of performing his duties, stood outside, watching the

conflagration. One of the rough crowd having recognised him, remarked with a broad grin, in allusion to his performance of Bow Bell in "The Illustrious Stranger," where he is supposed to undergo one of Sindbad's experiences: "Ah, Mr. Compton, you'll never be buried alive in that theatre again!" It was at the Strand that he played the part of Toby Twinkle in the original production of "All that Glitters is not Gold" at that theatre. When Farren returned to the Olympic after Watts's short and unsuccessful management there, my father accompanied him and remained there for three years, playing, among several other characters, Touchstone to Mrs. Stirling's Rosalind, Leigh Murray appearing as Orlando.

The Spectator of October 30th, 1852, in its criticism on "Sarah Bianji," a piece then lately produced at the Olympic Theatre, says: "Mr. Compton's impersonation of a mysterious philosopher who frustrates all Sarah's schemes, is one of those finished dramatic pictures which are by no means common; not quite serious or quite comic, but always civil and always shrewd, this character, as represented by the actor, has an individuality about it which would fairly give it a place in any theatrical portrait gallery."

And now came the offer to go to the Haymarket, which in due time was accepted, and there we find him in the spring of 1853. He remained there with Mr. Buckstone, as is pretty generally known, for nearly eighteen years—a good slice out of a man's professional life. In 1855 we notice him playing at this theatre in "Where there's a Will there's a Way," for Farren's last appearance and farewell benefit, under the immediate patronage of the Queen. The bill was rather a lengthy one, comprising, besides the above item, in which Mrs. Stirling and Leigh Murray appeared, "King René's Daughter," with Miss Helen Faucit, Messrs. Barry Sullivan, Howe, W. Farren, junior, E. Villiers, etc.; "A Moving Tale," with Mr. and Mrs. Keeley and Miss Mary Keeley; the first act of "Flying Colours," with Benjamin Webster and Madame Celeste; the second act of "The Clandestine Marriage," with Messrs. Farren, Alfred Wigan, Chippendale, Hare, etc.; and "Box and Cox," with Buckstone, Harley, and Mrs. Griffiths. Then there was a new Spanish ballet by Señora Perea Nena, Señor Marcos Dioz, and "their twelve unequalled coryphées;" a selection by Albert Smith, from "The Ascent of Mont Blanc," and the "Bay of Biscay," by

Mr. Sims Reeves. Not a bad evening's entertainment with the "prices as usual!"

It was during one of the Haymarket company's annual tours that my father first became acquainted with the Manchester folks, and, as he told them in one of his later speeches, "Manchester, in a way of its own, took to him from the first." That they stuck to him to the last will be abundantly seen as we proceed. During his long stay at the Haymarket, his old ill-luck with regard to not getting good "original" parts still stood in his way, though his Blenkinsop, "Unequal Match;" Sir Solomon Frazer, "Overland Route;" De Vaudray, "Hero of Romance;" Captain Mountraffe, "Home;" the deaf postman, "Evil Genius;" and a few others, served to show how well he understood the art of "creating" a character. A Manchester critic has thus remarked on his Blenkinsop. "The flunky out of livery was Mr. Compton's original character, and it suited him to a T. He convulsed the house with laughter by merely crossing the stage, without speaking and without any exaggeration of walk or gesture. Indeed the great charm of Mr. Compton's acting is its absence of effort. Although his face can assume the most

comical expression, he never grimaces. Sometimes an elevation of the eyebrow, a sudden twitch of the mouth, a turn of the wrist, or lifting of the foot will provoke unbounded merriment, but all these are so spontaneous that they are more supplements to the words he is uttering, or the situation of the piece, than mere stage tricks and devices." Then again, another critic has thus discoursed of his performance of the deaf postman in "The Evil Genius," Joe Withers by name. It was a very small part, but he made it stand out from all the rest. "How admirable a character does it seem in the hands of Compton! Every portion of his dress is a study. It is suitable to the old man—a superannuated huntsman. He has the long gaiters and the stable memories about him. Superinduced upon this out-of-door look, one can discern the late-acquired literary habits of the postman. He handles his letters as if he had begun the trade late in life. When he has made up his mind to decipher he requires to summon his whole faculties. He has to lay down his staff, to make solemn and deliberate preparations by extricating, first, his spectacle-case from his waistcoat-pocket, next the spectacles from their case, and lastly it is his

business carefully to affix the instrument to his nose. Every motion shows that the postman's life is to him something strange and unnatural. Contrast this with the systematic and almost instinctive alacrity with which the old man halloes his lungs out when commanded to give the view-halloo at the chamber-door. Nor are the dazed memory and the boring garrulity of the veteran the least admirable part of the impersonation. Truly a marvellous study of character."

The above-mentioned original parts, together with such characters as Dr. Pangloss, Dr. Ollapod, Touchstone, Dogberry, Paul Pry, and the capital farces, "Fish out of Water," "Friend Waggles," "Founded on Facts," "Family Jars," "His First Champagne," *cum multis aliis*, and some of Talfourd's, Planché's, and Byron's extravaganzas (in which the latter author avers he was inimitable), served to keep him in favour with the public for many years; and while that period passes rapidly in review before the eyes of the old playgoer, I trust I may be forgiven if I now speak for a little while of other things than new parts and new engagements, merely taking occasion to remark that in 1857, as well as in

1849, he appeared at the Windsor Castle theatrical performances, as did my mother in 1848.

At the time we are now arrived at, my father lived at 16, Charing Cross, where most of his family were born; and the "confirmed bachelor" having at last resolved into the staid married man, his club was soon given up (it was the "Garrick") and his old amusements partially so.

One of the latter was a great fondness for the "noble art of self-defence;" and he might frequently have been seen at Angelo's room, setting-to with a certain Captain McTuck, one of the best boxers of his day. The celebrated James or Jim Ward was his principal instructor, and before us we have a few lines written by that gentleman, who, it will be seen, was able to assert himself with an open as well as with a doubled-up fist:

York Hotel, Williamson Square, Liverpool,
July 25th, 1848.

DEAR MR. COMPTON,

I have received your very kind and friendly letter. Your proverb is certainly "musty," but your acceptable gift is very "fresh" and "blooming." Now, as a small return for the tie and pin; when

you get a chance to "slate" a saucy fellow, you must "pin" him on the nose once or twice, and that will soon "tie" him up.

I am really much gratified with your kind and elegant present, and when we meet again we must cancel the obligation by your taking it out in "lessons;" so keep yourself in good condition, and work hard with the dumb-bells.

Yours truly,

JAMES WARD.

The last admonition — to work hard with the dumb-bells—was one my father never allowed himself to forget, and it was only during the last few years of his life that he really discontinued practice with them. The exercise he took, and the regular life he led were the means of preserving his constitution, appearance, and figure to such a wonderful extent; and the oft-repeated remark, "that man never looks any older," was strictly true in his case. His objection to all spirits, except when taken medicinally, often gave rise to some odd incidents. For instance, I have often seen him, when entertaining his friends, slyly fill his glass with cold water,

having previously made much to-do with the whisky-decanter, and taken not a drop; then look round at one of us with a wink of deep satisfaction, and continue to sip the anything but exhilarating beverage which he believed in so thoroughly. His favourite wine for everyday drinking was a good dry sherry. Beer he could not touch; but for many years a couple of glasses of sherry at dinner served him for the whole day; and after a long performance at the Haymarket, he has returned home night after night to the frugal supper of his own choosing, namely, bread-and-butter and a glass of cold water, followed by a dry pipe and the leading articles of *The Times*.

Apropos of an absurd printer's error which occurred in a critique on one of his performances, I find the following note from the late John Oxenford:

MY DEAR COMPTON,

For "infinitely dull," read "infinitely droll." *Verbum sat.*

Very truly yours,

JOHN OXENFORD.

P.S.—Show this to anybody you please. The misprint will, I hope, be explained.

It must have been about this time that he enjoyed the friendship of the well-remembered wit, Douglas Jerrold; with regard to whom my father tells the following anecdote against himself. One morning they proceeded together to view the pictures in the "Gallery of Illustration." On entering the anteroom, they found themselves opposite to a number of very long looking-glasses. Pausing before one of these, my father remarked to Jerrold: "You've come here to admire works of art! Very well, first feast your eyes on that work of nature!" pointing to his own figure reflected in the glass. "Look at it, there's a picture for you!" "Yes," said Jerrold, regarding it intently, "very fine, very fine indeed!" Then turning to his friend: "Wants hanging though!"

The following *bon mot* of my father's has been erroneously ascribed to this inveterate joker. Meeting a friend one day, when the weather had taken a most sudden and unaccountable turn from cold to warmth, the subject was mooted as usual, and characterised by the gentleman as being "most extraordinary." "Yes," replied my father, "it is a most unheard-of thing; we've jumped from winter into summer without a spring."

While "i' the vein" for anecdotes, I may as well

tell here a capital one, and as yet, I believe, unpublished, concerning a performance at the Haymarket Theatre. It might almost be entitled "A good practical joke gone wrong," for it turns on the subject of this species of wit. Now practical joking is all very well if judiciously executed and well carried out. In this instance, the latter proviso not being complied with, the result proved funnier than the original idea. In the "good old days" at the Haymarket Theatre, they were running the musical farce of "No Song, No Supper," and the exigencies of the piece required a real boiled leg of mutton every night, which, according to the law of "property," or rather the "property-man's" law in a theatre, went after performance almost untouched to the official named. But the "flymen" perched up aloft did not like this, which occurred night after night to their growing dissatisfaction; for they, too, had wives and families to whom a boiled leg of mutton free of charge would have been a thing to be remembered. So they hit upon a plan, and one night Mr. William Farren, who had the carving of the aforesaid leg, was solicited to fix a hook that would be let down from the "flies" into the mutton, and "leave the rest to them."

Farren, always ready for a practical joke, consented at once, and as the scene was coming to a termination, deftly fastened the hook into the leg, and "left the rest to them." As the scene-shifters were preparing to "close in" and the property-man stood at the wings ready to seize on his perquisite, the leg of mutton was seen slowly to ascend, without any visible agency. The audience laughed, my father (who, as Endless, was watching the manœuvre from his sack) laughed too, and the *employés* all gave vent to their feelings in ill-suppressed merriment—all save the property-man, who remained miserably serious, and gazed at his fast-departing supper with a woe-begone countenance. Suddenly, as the scene was almost closed in, the hook which Farren had unfortunately only fastened in the fat, gave way, and down came the much-coveted mutton on the dish with a terrific splash. The audience now roared; the *employés* roared; Farren at the table and my father in the sack roared; and as the "flats" hid the unrehearsed tableau from view, the now delighted property-man rushed on the stage, and securing his ill-treated supper, joined in the general roar. Our "fly"-fishers were never known to try a "hook" again.

CHAPTER VII.

Married Life at Charing Cross—Later Reading—Dickens—Brontë and Thackeray — Intimacy with Dickens — Anecdote of Thackeray.

My father's marriage with Miss Emmeline Montague took place in 1848. The wedding breakfast was given at Mark Lemon's House, in Hammersmith. After much wearisome search, my mother was fortunate enough to find apartments which completely suited my father's professional requirements. These were at 16, Charing Cross, situated conveniently for every London theatre except the Princess's, and close to the parks. Here my father lived till his family became too large for the accommodation the house could afford. From their modest start they had continued engaging more rooms until, ultimately, they rented the whole of the upper part of the house. From its central position my father's house became the recognised rendezvous of his friends. It was a

cheerful place to look into of an afternoon; the visitor was certain to have a kindly welcome, to be invited to join in a social pipe, and then to join the family at the light tea my father took before going to the theatre. His relatives from the country made annual visits to him, and as the avocations of some of them were scientific, the casual caller had to be careful what he did, or he might upset a jar of lively water-beetles over a new manuscript part, or sit down on a set of microscopic mounts. The nephews and nieces whom he had amused and frightened at the same time when they were young were cordially received when they came up to see the wonders of the "great metropolus," and they could not have come to anyone better qualified for setting them in the right way to see the sights of London. Altogether, what with a young and noisy family, relatives, and personal friends, the house was a tolerably lively one. The visitor was pretty sure of hearing what was doing in the dramatic or literary world. He might meet a well-known actor or author, and have the pleasure, sweet to the outsider, of hearing the celebrity talk on his own profession, or recount the gossip of the green-room or the editor's sanctum. Owing to the nearness of his home

to the Haymarket, my father would often step over between the pieces when he had a longish "wait" and have a smoke, read *The Times*, and then return to play in the last farce. On one occasion he was engaged in conversation with his wife, and got so interested that he utterly forgot he had to play again that night. Luckily a pause in the conversation brought the theatre to his mind; he hurried off, and just reached it in time. At the risk of making him, a most punctual man, appear forgetful, I will relate a similar instance; but it should be borne in mind that these were very rare occurrences during a long professional life.

This instance of forgetfulness occurred while he was at the Princess's. He was playing in the last piece only. He had no engagement before the performance, and was reading some historical work he had lately bought. He became completely absorbed in the book, and read till he became tired. He then refreshed himself with his moderate supper and a pipe, and quietly went off to bed. He did not go to sleep at once—an unusual thing with him, probably occasioned by his not having played—and while he lay awake the thought suddenly flashed across his

mind that he had to play that night, that there was a royal bespeak, and that the Queen would be at the theatre. He rose at once, dressed with the utmost speed, hurried out, hailed a cab, incited its driver by the promise of liberal payment, and arrived at the theatre in time to dash on his dress and answer his cue at the nick of time.

At Charing Cross most of his children were born. I have an indistinct recollection of being awakened early one summer morning and taken to the nursery window, where my father pointed out the Guards marching down to embark for the Crimea. Our house was opposite Drummond's Bank, and when my father was not there to see us safely over the dangerous crossing, the bank-porter would take us over in turn, a service for which he was rewarded by an order for the play now and again. Whenever his engagements allowed it, my father would take us out in the Green Park or St. James's Park, and enter into our childish play as readily as he did, in later years, in our sports. The celebrated confectioner's, Farrance's, was only a few doors from Drummond's, and the reward of good behaviour was to be taken there to indulge in their famous cheesecakes. Whenever my father took

us by the shop he was subjected to very broad hints, and was often beguiled into giving us unforeseen treats.

In the account of my father's early reading may have been noticed the omission, among others, of two famous names—Dickens and Thackeray. This was chiefly due to a preference for considering, as far as possible, the whole of these authors' works together. With Lord Lytton the case is different, from the style and subjects of his later novels having little in common with his early productions. The other omissions were caused by his not having read the works till the period now under consideration.

My father read at this time Lytton's "Lucretia," which of course belongs to the earlier stage of the author's development; but the accumulation of horrors in this work prevented his giving it other praise than was due to it from the writer's previous reputation. "The Caxtons" and "My Novel" are probably the works of Lytton that have secured appreciation from the widest circle. For both of these novels my father had a great admiration, but "The Caxtons" was his especial favourite. It has been persistently urged against this work that it is

nothing but an imitation of "Tristram Shandy," and a bad imitation too. This objection has been held by judges whose opinion is of great weight; and before denying its accuracy it is necessary to see how far it is well founded. That the objection is based on the general resemblance of the two books is at once apparent to any reader of both. Is the resemblance more than general? Lytton aimed at doing for a later age what Sterne had done for his own. If Sterne's method of exhibiting the rural life is the only true one, Lytton is scarcely to be blamed for adopting the same plan. If Sterne's characters justly represent the people of his time, a similar choice of persons is equally appropriate in "The Caxtons." A charge of plagiarism can hardly be intended. There is an inevitable likeness in men and women of all ages. As Lady Mary Wortley Montague said, she had travelled widely, but had met only two kinds of people—men and women. The limits of their variation are fixed by their common nature; the difference is not in essentials, but in accidents. With the same object in view, Lytton took the same models as Sterne, and modified them for his purpose; he was not debarred from using them because they had been

used before. Modern literature concerns itself largely with the reproduction of minor types. It would be unreasonable to object to these creations because it could be shown that their undeveloped germs were discoverable in older writings. So, indeed, agreeing with the justice of the charge of imitation, it seems more natural to say that both Sterne and Lytton used previously existing models, which they modified according to the temper and spirit of the times they were depicting. Another point is the very subordinate part that plot has in Sterne's work. My father had a strong dislike to imitation, and a quick perception of its existence; but he always said that he could never understand on what grounds it was preferred against "The Caxtons." "My Novel" he thought a worthy pendant to its predecessor. Of "A Strange Story," I recollect his saying, when he had just finished it, that the title was "happy." This work rather perplexed than pleased the majority of its author's admirers, and on this occasion my father was with the crowd.

The author, who has appealed to a larger audience than that of any of his contemporaries, is the next to be considered. Dickens, from this point, is the English

novelist of the present century. My father's reading of Dickens began with the first number of "Pickwick," and ended with the last number of "Edwin Drood." When "Pickwick" came out he was in the country with Mr. Chute. He would often recall how, when their appetites had been whetted by the earlier numbers, they would eagerly look for the next number. With what a zest it was read; with what frequent laughter was the reading interrupted; what discussions they had over Sam Weller and his aged parent, over the simple Pickwick and the artful Jingle! I have before referred to my father's delight in humour; it was in Dickens's humour—free, fresh, and unequalled—that he found the quality common to them both. The strength of that first impression was never lessened; "Pickwick" remained his favourite novel of Dickens throughout his life. The works of Dickens are too numerous for me to give my father's opinions of them separately, and I must therefore only endeavour to give his view of Dickens's genius as a whole.

Dickens's distinctive qualities he considered to be humour and accurate delineation of the lower classes. Of his humour my father never tired; he declared it

to be the best of its style ever produced or likely to be produced. His difference from his predecessors was not more marked than his distance from his imitators—a class for which my father had a very decided antipathy. As to Dickens's portrayal of low life, he thought it alone sufficient to have made the author's success. This opinion was valuable, as he knew London low life better than nine-tenths of Dickens's readers, having gained his knowledge by observation, not from reading. Great geniuses have great faults, and my father was not one of those injudicious admirers who insist on the absolute perfection of Dickens's works. He thought that the humorist was greater than the novelist, the man than the author. He thought that the habit of writing against a grievance, or with a purpose, as it is called, a special defect of Dickens. He perceived a tendency to exaggeration, and a want of connection in plot, which weakened the effect of some of his best works. But though he was ready to acknowledge defects in Dickens, there was no warmer advocate of his distinctive qualities than my father. The praise of a reader who discriminates impartially is more valuable than that of one who follows the fashion of lauding unreservedly the successful author. My

father had made Dickens's acquaintance shortly before his marriage, and they afterwards became intimate. He frequently visited at Dickens's house, where he met the most celebrated men of the day. The dining-tables were purposely made very narrow, to facilitate opposite guests talking with one another. Sometimes the end of the table touched a mirror, which reflected the whole scene, and increased the brilliance of its appearance. "These dinner-parties," he said, "were very enjoyable." Dickens himself was a faultless host, and knew the art of putting his guests at their ease, so that each appeared at his best. The example of their host's brilliance and animation aroused the energies of this company, causing each individual to exert his powers of entertainment and conversation to their utmost. The effect was what would be expected from the entertainer and his friends. Every subject of the day came under the discussion of the men best fitted to discuss it; politics, literature, and the drama were each treated with a felicity of phrase, a practical knowledge, and a subtlety of discrimination seldom met with. A rare humour and keen wit were brought to the consideration of every theme, with sometimes a boldness of paradox that refreshed and

delighted the company. Altogether, my father said he had been to few parties where the pleasure was more exquisite and more sustained. It was always a matter of regret to him that the domestic affairs of the great humorist should have interrupted an intercourse productive of the intellectual enjoyment he preferred to any other amusement.

The publication of "Jane Eyre" by "Currer Bell" produced a sensation that falls to the fate of very few works by unknown authors. My father read this and other works of Charlotte Brontë when the curiosity about their authorship and admiration for their author were at the highest. As pretty conclusive of the sex of the author, my father pointed out to a friend the passage referring to the visit of some ladies to Mr. Rochester's house, when the author says: "They went upstairs to take off their things"—an expression so peculiarly feminine as to leave little doubt of the author's sex.

"Jane Eyre" made a profound impression on him. He felt most keenly its focussed strength, at times so terrible in its intensity; he was powerfully struck by the thorough impress that it bore of its author's individuality. Her other works, "Shirley," "The

Professor," and "Villette," he read with much interest; still he thought "Jane Eyre" Charlotte Brontë's best work—indeed the best novel written by any woman.

When the author's death made her mournful career the theme of general regret, my father's love for her works was increased by the sympathy he felt for one whose life had been a cruel struggle, and by his reverence for her noble fortitude. During his next visit to Bradford, he made it a sacred duty to visit the scene of Charlotte Brontë's trials and labours. To look for pleasant associations of "Currer Bell" was vain; sad was her life and gloomy are its associations. When we recollect how highly my father valued Charlotte Brontë's works, no explanation of his unreserved contempt for her many imitators is needed. It is not a pleasant reflection that the works of great authors produce a crowd of imitations which have far more of insult than of flattery.

The next writer to be mentioned is he who shares with Dickens the position of premier English novelist of this period. Thackeray's differences from Dickens are so great that there is only a comparison of unlikeness between them. I have before spoken of my

father's appreciation of writers of great contrast in style and subject, which I thought was due first to his catholic taste, and secondly to his absence from prejudice in matters of literature. His estimate of Thackeray, and the impression made on him by Thackeray's novels, is the sole exception I know. It will be better to say frankly that he did not like Thackeray's works. In this dislike he was not absolutely unsupported, but the fondness of the reading public generally, and professional critics in particular, for Thackeray's writings, makes any dissidence remarkable. My father had read all Thackeray's writings, except perhaps "The Adventures of Philip." While the general impression they made on him was unfavourable, he could yet acknowledge individual excellences. He thought Thackeray's powers as an artistic novelist greater than those of any of his contemporaries, and his style at once polished and incisive, a model for future writers. The force and fidelity with which his characters are drawn were fully appreciated by my father. As to the truth to nature of many of Thackeray's creations he was well fitted to judge, since his profession made him also a student of men. He considered the pathos shown, for

example, in the character Colonel Newcome preferable to that exhibited in the description of Paul Dombey's death. The wit that forms the inseparable feature of Thackeray's genius could not fail to appeal to one of whose intellectual pleasures wit was so important an ingredient. Where, then, is the cause for his distaste for Thackeray? In this wit itself, or rather in the mode of its exercise. It was the cynical nature of Thackeray's wit that made him disliked by my father. His constant attacks on the habits, tone, and objects of modern society; his peculiarity of almost invariably showing the mean and sordid side of human nature; the spirit of contempt for and disgust with his fellow-man; the pleasure he took in tracing kind actions to unworthy motives, his disbelief in human excellence, and his many repulsive characters were what repelled my father. That my father was right in his dislike I will not venture to say; I have only to show what were the causes of that dislike. His nature was kindly, indulgent, and cheerful; what wonder if he could not enjoy the delineation of meanness, snobbishness, and baseness? Moreover, his mind was not of that analytic order which could enjoy the dissection of repulsive forms of

human character; he could not suspend his belief in human goodness, and look on with scientific callousness while the social operator demonstrated the amazing prevalence of disease. It has been debated whether Thackeray was more satirist than novelist, but the discussion is useless, since separation is impossible; but, could it be effected, I think that my father's attitude towards Thackeray would be fairly stated when I say that he would gratefully accept the novelist and leave the satirist to the appreciation of others.

My father's distaste for the tone of Thackeray's works did not prevent him having a very strong regard for their author. They were both members of the Garrick Club, and, besides, often met at other places. The following anecdote will show that Thackeray was quite ready to put in practice the theories he supported in his novels:

I well recollect my brother and myself meeting my father returning from rehearsal, through Hyde Park, in company with a tall burly man of a ruddy complexion. My father carelessly introduced us as two of the "varmints;" his friend shook hands with us, and inquired about our school affairs and sports

more kindly than did most middle-aged gentlemen we knew. They were both engaged in conversation which we did not understand, till, just before reaching the barracks, my father said: "Well, we have to part here, as you are going to Oxford Street." "Yes," said his friend, "I must leave you and your boys now;" and turning to us he wished us good-bye very heartily; then, as he was shaking hands with my father, he added: "I wonder what there is in my purse? There, Compton, take it, and give the young 'uns what there is—not much, I'm thinking." "No, no," said my father; "you must not do that." "Nonsense, my dear fellow; I was a schoolboy once, and know the value of 'tips.' Everybody should 'tip' schoolboys—it does them good." So saying, he hurried off, leaving his purse with my father.

"Who is that?" we both exclaimed. "That's a very celebrated man called Thackeray," said my father. "How much is there?" was the next very natural question. I forget the exact amount; but we both went home some five or six shillings richer, much impressed with the celebrated man who had such "stunning" ideas, and carried them out so well.

During his life at Charing Cross, my father had

but one holiday—the only break in eleven years' hard toil. He usually sent his wife and young children to the country, while he remained in sultry, arid London to work for them. Sometimes he would leave by an early train on Sunday morning, and return on the Monday afternoon. It was very seldom that he could be spared from the theatre on Saturday evening, but whenever that occurred he hastened to join his family.

How welcome his short visits were to his children, to whose amusement he devoted himself! He entered thoroughly into their games and projects, and invented others, which he carried out. How strange it seemed to them to see their "London" father in the country; how odd he looked in the farmhouse parlour; how novel it appeared to build sand fortifications under his advice, and how cleverly he showed the way to prevent the sea destroying them by the artful construction of moats and channels! In the summer's evening he would take them all for a country walk, answering all their unreasonable questions, and pointing out how this hedge or farmhouse resembled the hedges and farmhouses of the Huntingdon home of his boyhood, and how much inferior were the local Neddies to the unapproachable "Nobby." He con-

tinued to live at Charing Cross until 1857. In this year my father removed to Kensington, in the Stanford Road, where he took a house for three years, during which time he built himself a new one in the same street, christening it Seaforth House, after Lord Seaforth, once the head of the clan Mackenzie. He has well described the appearance of his family at dinner in the subjoined letter:

MY DEAR ——,

Thanks for your inquiries after the *stud.* I am happy to say the brats are all well, and, as you know, more numerous than select. I sometimes fancy, when seated at the end of the table, and *all told,* that I am president of a nice little "joint" stock company—terms, unlimited liability, with power to add to the number.

Yours very sincerely,

H. COMPTON.

CHAPTER VIII.

Continuance of Haymarket Engagement—Leaves the Haymarket—The Globe and Lyceum Engagements—Family Life at Kensington—The End.

WITH the advent of Charles Mathews and Sothern to the Haymarket, my father found he had to take his chance after Sothern and Buckstone, or Mathews and Buckstone, or else play the initial and concluding farce. This he very much objected to, and would doubtless have put an end to long before he did, had he not been withheld by a conscientious consideration with regard to his family, in case he should find that he had thrown away a good certainty, and had not reaped the benefit that was certainly very fairly to be expected. It was this feeling of justice to his family, backed up, perhaps, by a certain modesty that never permitted him, until latterly, to consider himself in the light of a "star," that forms the real secret of his not having taken that prominent position to which his great talents so fully entitled him. He

stands almost alone as regards this abnegation of self. He never visited America or Australia from these considerations; and had he not been so "shelved" during the latter part of his career at the Haymarket, there is great reason to believe that he would never have quitted that establishment. It is a noteworthy fact that he was never so commercially successful as when, in the summer of 1876, he went alone on a short provincial tour, which he was preparing to extend when his last illness struck him down. It seemed as though Fate had marked him out for an unpretending, sterling, legitimate actor, yet felt constrained to show him, in his last days, the ability he possessed to shine as a "star," especially had his nature permitted him to go in for the business portion of that position.

But to return to the Haymarket. So badly did things appear to go with him there that, finally, in justice to himself, he felt it his duty to accept a very capital offer from Mr. Charles Calvert, then manager of the Prince's Theatre, Manchester, to play in London and the provinces for one year; a new piece to be written for him. The new piece, by Tom Taylor, instead of being a comedy, as my father hoped, and

in fact desired that it might be, turned out to be a comedy-drama in four acts, with a good sprinkling of the sensational element. It was called "Handsome is that Handsome Does," and though in reality a fine play, it will be easily understood that the public did not expect to find my father as a sort of "hero," winning wrestling-matches, detecting assignations from his betrothed to his rival, struggling with that gentleman on the edge of a cliff, until stopped by the heroine, and eventually heroically jumping over the edge of this same cliff to save his rival, whom a thunderbolt had struck down. And consequently, though well received in Manchester, the piece was not liked in London, admirably played as it was, not only by my father, but by such artists as Mr. David Fisher, Mr. Charles Warner, the late George Belmore, and the Misses Mattie Reinhardt, Maria B. Jones, and Charlotte Saunders. So, after a short run at the Olympic, it was withdrawn. At the conclusion of the twelvemonth with Mr. Calvert, my father joined Mr. H. J. Montague, when he opened the Globe Theatre, appearing as Muggles in H. J. Byron's comedy of "Partners for Life." This piece was a great success, and had a long run, giving place at the conclusion to

Albery's "Forgiven." Anyone who saw this piece will not soon forget Paul Cudlip, the old gardener, with his quaint remarks, his consolatory "Tak' it aw thegither," and his sorrowful exit speech in one scene where he tottered off in deep grief, bearing with him the sympathies of the whole house. His Ox-eye, in the ill-fated "Oriana," was another fine creation; and with Matthew Pincher, "Cyril's Success;" Professor Truffles, "Time works Wonders;" and one or two other characters, he concluded his engagement with Mr. H. J. Montague. A critic in "The Gentleman's Magazine" thus spoke of him about this time: "Mr. Compton would have honourably filled an important place in Garrick or Sheridan's company at Drury Lane. We can fancy him, with his range of stock characters, appearing say twice in the week, figuring in the comedies of Colman the elder, Hoadley, Arthur Murphy, Garrick, Sheridan, and Mrs. Cowley; with the Baddeleys, Abingtons, Palmers, Westons, Yateses, and others, his powers would have developed, his style and dry humour have ripened. We should have now noble mezzotints of him by McArdle and Smith: 'Mr. Compton and Miss Pope in The Clandestine Marriage.' Look at his photograph in

the shop-windows—the exceeding dryness, the true 'crabbed' character, the walnutty indentations, the lurking slyness, the olive flavour in reserve—the sort of face we find in the ranks of the first-class French comedians! Had it belonged to a physician or clerk in an office, or to a private gentleman with means of his own, it would have shown a mere tranquil intelligence and nothing more; but the constant expression of humorous things has literally 'whetted' it into sharpness and angles, and denuded it of all that is pointless and superfluous. Mr. Phelps possesses one of those valuable physiognomies; so does Mr. Buckstone, though of another kind. With them it is the comedian's innate power that has told on the intelligent eye and facial muscle. But they stand almost alone; were we to call a review of most of our 'funny' men, a spectacle of faces singularly vacant in character would be presented. Sometimes our eminent burlesque characters are encountered in the street, and we are not impressed by their dull and ordinary expression. The truth is, where there is merely exercise of the facial muscles, the light of intellect withdraws more and more inward, as though not condescending to work with an ally

that wishes to be unintelligent. All mimics and clowns, who use their faces and limbs after purely mechanical principles, exhibit the absence of light and intellect. But the portraits of the old actors and actresses are delightful to look on; their faces beam with the highest expression and intelligence; they seem a company of the finest and most elegant ladies and gentlemen. Mr. Compton, during the best years of his career, belonged to the Haymarket company. Almost every part that he filled there he contrived to adorn. He possessed the gift of the old regulated humour, held in control, measured out by rule, culminating at the proper time, spontaneous, yet duly ordered. His voice was like an instrument, whose notes he could produce after the proper tone and tune. Hence there was a quiet weight and breadth in all he did and said. Hence that humour in inflection, attitude, air even. *He was the character*, as he stood; just as an eccentric in real life reveals his oddity even as he sits or stands. He thus brought a charm or value to those "old Haymarket comedies" which no one else at present on the English stage could."

The next season was taken up by the long run of "Hamlet," at the Lyceum, when he gave, for the last

time, his marvellous performance of the Gravedigger. I cannot do better than give the reader the following critique to bring more vividly before him this "gem" amongst performances of art: "Nothing can be more excellent than Compton's Gravedigger, in 'Hamlet.' There is a deliberation about every action of the man which admirably illustrates the character. There is a thorough self-satisfaction about him which is not to be shaken. He lords it over his brother-gravedigger; he congratulates himself on his keenness and power of shrewd repartee. When he propounds a riddle, he does it with the air of one who is propounding an insoluble problem. All the pride of intellect of the old village coxcomb Compton portrays with infinite gusto. He drops his spade, proposes his riddle, and composes himself on his spade-handle with a triumphant look which expects not an answer, but a confession of ignorance. He is like a Dutch painter—his details are elaborately accurate, and yet the whole is impregnated with that delicate sense of humour which is so charming and yet so rare."

I take this opportunity of giving the reader my father's speech at the celebration of the hundredth night of "Hamlet," when a supper was given to

Mr. Irving, at which many of the great lights of the dramatic and literary world were present. After several speeches had been made by the different celebrities assembled, all of whom commented at some length on the great talents of their guest, and the unparalleled run of a hundred nights which he had achieved for "Hamlet," my father's health was drunk, and he proceeded to reply. Commencing with many similar and complimentary remarks with regard to Mr. Irving and the long run of "Hamlet," he concluded by assuring them of "the pride he felt in thus celebrating the hundred and fiftieth night——" "No, Compton," a friend interrupted, "the *hundredth* night." A look of great surprise was the only acknowledgment of this correction, and he continued, "the hundred and fiftieth night——" "No, no, Compton," again put in this good-natured friend, "the *hundredth* night." This time no notice at all was taken of the interruption, and the speech finished thus: "The pride he felt in thus celebrating the hundred and *fiftieth* night—of the "*Fish out of Water!*" My readers will remember that this fine old farce was played fifty nights prior to the production of "Hamlet," when it still remained in the bill,

and will at once appreciate this magnificent "sell." He went on in the same strain for a bit, saying that "'Hamlet' served very well as an after-piece, when the principal dish of the evening had been discussed," etc. etc., and sat down amidst the heartiest laughter that had been heard that evening.

His engagement at the Lyceum turned out to be his last in London, and, strangely enough, he thus made his last appearance in the great city at the same theatre in which he had made his first.*

He now went on a tour with the "Vezin-Chippendale Company;" and I trust I shall not be considered as giving offence to anyone when I say that his great popularity in the provinces enabled him to render good service to that company. In Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Birmingham, Bradford, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and even Aberdeen—which place he had never visited—he was received with the greatest enthusiasm in the old comedies and farces, and more especially as Dr. Pangloss, Ollapod, and Mawworm. On the occasion of his benefit at Manchester, a critic remarks that "the Prince's was packed from floor to

* With the exception of some performances at the Gaiety matinées.

ceiling; indeed we do not remember to have ever seen it more crowded." After his tremendous reception and the piece ("The Hypocrite") were over, my father, still wearing the costume of Mawworm, spoke as follows when the cheering had subsided, first apologising for the dress he wore: "I come before you with the same old story, on the same old errand—that is to offer you my sincere thanks; thanks for the bumper of this evening, thanks for your patronage, and thanks for the hearty welcome with which you receive me on all occasions. It is some relief to my sensitive nature to reflect that the overwhelming obligations under which I have been in the habit of laying myself to you by these appeals have subsided, and that the annual tax I have laid upon your generosity, as well as your incomes, has not been repeated for the last five or six years. But I must not take too much credit to myself for that, for had it been left to myself, I do not think you would have been excused. Had circumstances admitted, you might still have been laid under contribution. Who would have thought, a few years ago, that the very efficient, effective, compact corps that used to form the Haymarket company would have become

disbanded in this way—dispersed, I may say dismembered? But certainly circumstances alter cases; and in theatrical affairs, as well as others, we must yield to the force of circumstances. But our case is not so bad, after all. The contents of the dishes we lay before you are the same as those we served up formerly, but some of the earthenware has given way, some of the crockery has come to pieces; still there are a few of the old-fashioned mugs left" (stroking his chin), "and, by your reception of them, we are led to believe that they have not yet lost their spirit and flavour. While we give you such a compound, and offer a dramatic cup composed of such ingredients as Shakespeare, Sheridan, Goldsmith, etc., and while our friends bring with them honest, wholesome, robust English appetites, I am sure the beverage will always go down. I have again to thank you most sincerely and heartily. Long may we continue to put our viands before you, long may you preserve your relish for them, and frequent may be our visits to you!" (Loud cheers.)

The advent of a cat on the stage has often nonplussed even an old stager, and is most assuredly a great and unpardonable nuisance; for these creatures,

if necessary in the daytime, should most certainly be expelled during the hours of performance. I remember, when my father was inditing the challenge as Acres, at Manchester, a few nights before the above occasion, he turned round from remonstrating with Sir Lucius, and there, with its hind-paws on a chair, and its front ones on the table, he encountered the gaze of an inquisitive "tabby." He said not a word, he wrote not a line, but he sat regarding Pussy, and Pussy remained regarding him, until he had moulded his features into that blank stare for which he was so famous. Pussy could not stand this, and she accordingly made a most effective exit, her eyes being fixed to the last on my father's. The audience, who had watched the manœuvre in amused silence, now fairly roared, and, after a hearty round of applause, the letter was resumed.

At the conclusion of this tour, and after a short rest, he played a brief "starring" engagement in the country, staying at Manchester for a month, and, on his benefit there, introducing his elder daughter to his friends, the public. The next town he visited was Liverpool, where I happened to be playing at the time, and, after a twelve nights' engagement at the

Prince of Wales's Theatre, where he played Dr. Pangloss and Mawworm, he made his last bow to the public in "The Hypocrite" (gaining the usual encore for the great sermon) and the last two acts of "The Heir-at-Law." Those who appeared with him—amongst whom were Messrs. H. St. Maur, Fourness Rolfe, W. J. Brooks, and E. M. Robson; Miss Annie Hill, Miss Mary Rorke, and Miss Fanny Pitt—will, I doubt not, recall the circumstance with some satisfaction, not unmingled with regret. Personally speaking, it will be one of my proudest thoughts, though necessarily a mournful one, to remember that I appeared in his support as Dick Dowlas and Colonel Lambert on that Saturday, July 14th, 1877. He was suffering acutely at this time, though no trace of it was to be seen in his acting; and I well remember seeing him off at the Lime Street station, when he confided to me how very ill he felt, and what pain he was in.

His years at Seaforth House were on the whole the happiest period of his life. Though this time was not free from sorrow, sudden and heavy, and struggle that had but one end, still he had the simple pleasures he loved most. Soon after the house was completed he developed a passion for horticulture. He began

modestly taking rather a general interest in shrubs as necessary adjuncts, than specially attractive themselves. His progress was rapid; he soon took to talking learnedly of aucubas and arbor vitaes, of the superiority of tile over box borders, of the necessity of thorough digging over in the spring and autumn. This digging he would often do himself for days at a time, and much more strenuously than the professional gardeners. He tried to inspire his boys with an equal ardour, but without much success. In a short time he knew the name, locality, and constitution of every shrub in his garden. He would in the spring sometimes pathetically remark, "Aren't my plants catching it from these east winds, confound them!" The removal of the shrubs was a matter demanding much pondering and careful execution. He gradually replaced all the common plants by choice specimens bought either from Messrs. Veitch or Waterer. Among his prime favourites was prostrate juniper, which had been sent from Devonshire when he first stocked the garden. It was quite a small shrub when first planted, but it throve wonderfully, and ultimately attained an exceptional size, spreading its delicate branches in every direction.

Owing to its position near the borders it had to be pruned on two sides, but on others it was unchecked, and covered a large portion of a good-sized bed. There was, besides, another old inhabitant of which he was very fond, an ivy which grew with wonderful luxuriance, concealing the wall for many yards. With his usual consideration for his children, he had left fully half of the garden as a playground for them. The remainder he had divided into a large round bed, with a crescent-shaped bed behind it, and a border about four or five feet wide at the sides spreading out into a large bed at the end of the garden. This round bed was his *magnum opus* in horticulture. It was first stocked with a few rhododendrons of the common *Ponticum* variety and a few azaleas, a substratum of peat being provided for them. Increasing knowledge brought its inevitable result, fastidiousness. The lowly *Ponticum* that erst had satisfied his taste became despised; it was removed to the side beds and obscure corners, or used as a stopgap, to make room for its aristocratic congeners. Plants of small size but relatively large cost were gradually introduced. Artistic massing and harmony of colour were aimed at. Symmetry of form became looked for. From the

same nurserymen came rhododendrons with noble or celebrated names. The visitor was introduced to Lord Clive, compact and hardy; Lord Raglan, brilliant but inclined to straggle; Mrs. Waterer, adequately supporting a well-known name; Catawbiense, Blandyanum, Barclayanum, and many others which fellow-lovers of rhododendrons will call to mind.

In the summer morning he would work here with spade or fork, and, when he had done, survey the result with a critical eye. There was usually something to employ him—plants to move, creepers to nail up, or alterations to plan. In the afternoon he would take his pipe into the garden, and pass away the time contemplating the successes or failures of his plants; and sometimes, indeed, he would meditate on his professional prospects—often not cheering—and his domestic affairs—seldom without anxiety. The result of his attention to his rhododendrons was to make them the admiration both of fellow-gardeners and unskilled friends. From the continual additions made, the round bed had become full of the choicest rhododendrons, with one or two high-class azaleas. It was his object to secure a succession of bloom for

as long a time as possible, and on this account he chose plants that succeeded one another regularly. He preferred the successive blooming of a few plants to the simultaneous bloom of the whole bed which only lasted for a short time. The choice varieties he secured exhibited the richness and diversity of colour, with a firmness of flower, which makes the rhododendron one of the most effective ornaments of a garden.

His exertions in the garden show that he had retained his youthful capacity for physical labour. Besides this, he was accustomed, in dry weather, to walk to rehearsal at the Haymarket, and home again to Kensington. Sometimes, when the bill allowed, he would walk the distance four times a day. In his walks in the daytime he was often accompanied by some of his children.

His profession, his children, and his garden fully occupied his time. He had a strong sense of parental duty. Among his theories of a parent's duty was the one that the father should begin his children's education. With this view, at considerable inconvenience, he taught all his children the first rudiments of education. He considered that every child

should read fluently, write legibly, cypher tolerably, and spell correctly before it was sent to school; the master's business was to work on this home foundation. He paid great attention to reading; and before he handed over his boys to the schoolmaster they could all read much better than most boys of their age. But this excellence soon disappeared. Reading is not cultivated at classical schools; and besides, the practice of construing pieces of Latin or Greek, two or three words at a time, with a pause to think of the meanings and cases or moods, would destroy the elocution of Cicero, and of course rapidly obliterate all the effect of home teaching. My father's interest in his sons' education continued throughout their school life. Four of his sons were educated at the Kensington Proprietary Grammar School; two at a school kept by the Rev. Mr. Gaitskell, a former class-master at Kensington; and another, whose experience of schools was varied, was at both these schools for a time. At both places it was customary to send the parents a monthly record of their sons' progress, showing the relative proficiency in the different subjects, by means of a tabular statement termed an *optimé* paper. If the pupil had gained a certain

proportion of marks in each subject, without bad marks, he would as a rule be granted the monthly holiday termed in school parlance the *optimé*. There was a space left on the *optimé*-form for the class-master or head-master to express his opinion on the boy's advance and behaviour during the last month. These papers were always carefully examined by my father, who readily received any rational explanation of low marks, and substantially showed his delight with a good *optimé*. With a well-meant view of testing his boys' progress in classics he would regularly ask them to translate any quotations he met with while reading, and was sometimes surprised to find they could not do so. But when the youthful struggler in Livy or Xenophon pointed out that he had not read Terence or Euripides, and that quotations were very often idioms difficult to render at first sight, my father would receive the excuse with kindness, but dilate—rather unnecessarily, as it appeared to us—on the admirable opportunity of finding out the meaning at once.

He placed great stress on the importance of possessing a general knowledge of English history. He would sometimes regret the deterioration of hand-

writing and reading resulting from schoolwork. If his anxiety about his children's progress in study was great, no less was his interest in their recreations. There was ample food for the youthful imagination in his library. His boys were free to read Marryat's enchanting sea-novels, or Cooper's wondrous tales of Chingachgook and Leatherstocking, besides Maxwell's "Stories of Waterloo"—a novel too little known nowadays—odd volumes of Grant and James, and a complete set of Lytton's novels. There was no lack of good reading for schoolboys with a healthy love of outdoor sports. The boys were also allowed to read what books they liked from the school library, or to borrow of their schoolfellows, subject to the inspection of the home censorship. Still, the children's great treat in the way of reading was Scott or Dickens, read to them by their father.

By some fortunate chance, he was not required at the Haymarket, for a long time, until nine or half-past nine o'clock in the evening. This state of affairs lasted for periods of a month or six weeks or even two months at a time. The readings took place in the garden during summer, and in the dining-room in winter, and there was but one qualification necessary

for the auditors—having done lessons. Scott was the first author chosen, and "Old Mortality" the novel. This reading took place in the garden; and the recollection of the stern tones of the Covenanters, and the lively recital of the merry revelry of the shooting at the popinjay, heard in the declining light of a summer's evening, is still fresh in my memory. He read to us all but the least celebrated of Scott's novels; I think there were not more than four left unread. Such an author, read by an ordinary reader, would have given great pleasure. What must it have been when the reader was one in whose profession elocution was of primary importance, and himself a finished elocutionist? It was reading truly so called, not acting; there was no gesture; there was now and then facial expression, but the work was really done by the voice. The effect was conveyed by modulations suited to the character, and also to that character's mood. The broad Lowland dialect of Bailie Nicol Jarvie was easily changed for the rapid utterance of Helen Macgregor and the spirited self-assertion of Rob Roy. The chivalrous tone of the young Bertram was as naturally given as the prophetic warnings of Meg Merrilies were dramatically uttered, or the deep

tones of Dirk Hatteraick accurately reproduced. Scott's novels are many, his characters proportionately numerous, and to make detailed reference to each would be wearisome; the reader must therefore choose some character at random, and, closing his eyes, imagine that the person stands talking before him. Such was the effect given by my father's reading. Each character had its separative voice, each emotion its distinctive intonation, and the descriptive portions, which might have been distasteful to a young audience, were so skilfully treated that their length was unnoticed. It is only right to state that the reader enjoyed the book nearly as much as the listeners, and often wished that the Haymarket audience would give him a holiday for once in a way, just to finish the volume.

To the great romancer of past times succeeded the greatest of modern English novelists. After Scott came Dickens. The difference was great, but this increased the pleasure. Dickens was so utterly unlike Scott that we could scarcely believe they were both novelists. That cultivated power of reading which had made Scott so delightful, could not fail to increase our pleasure in Dickens. It is something to have

made your first acquaintance with Sam Weller, jun., as a living character, with a voice of a very peculiar but suitable kind. Then again how truthfully did my father convey the good-natured simplicity of Mr. Pickwick, the boasting of Mr. Winkle, the light-hearted gaiety of the inimitable Jingle, or the coarser merriment of Mr. Bob Sawyer and his select friends. Many a delightful evening did we spend listening to the adventures of Nicholas Nickleby or young Martin Chuzzlewit, till the hour came for children to go to rest, the father to go to work for those he had but just ceased amusing. Sometimes a friend would look in and eagerly deprecate any cessation of the reading, only asking to be allowed to listen, and at the end overwhelming the reader with thanks and praise. He assiduously devoted himself to instructing his boys in manly sports. Most of us took to the "gloves" very early, and owe any special proficiency to this early training. In boxing his first care was to develop the power of hitting straight from the shoulder, then the right attitude, and afterwards guarding. It was very difficult to please him, because he would not be satisfied with anything but the best. He was chary of praise,

rather preferring to prophesy what the pupil ultimately would do if he stuck to it. The rudiments acquired, there was nothing but practice wanting to make a good boxer. Our instruction in rowing took place on the Serpentine, but it was not carried out as thoroughly as the other sports, since my father's evening work prevented his coming with us except on half-holidays. Swimming he considered very necessary, and took tickets for us at the Kensington Baths, so that we might learn the art. He would come every now and then to see how we were getting on, and sometimes, though rarely, would join us and show us how to swim properly. From his acquaintance with the riding-master of one of the household cavalry regiments, we were all enabled to acquire the art of riding, which was taught us by the corporal of the riding-school. My father, who had of course gone through it all himself, would sometimes turn into the school, as he was returning from rehearsal and carefully criticise the seat and style of the young rider.

The athletic sports that are now among the accepted amusements of society were but little known twenty years ago. Kensington Proprietary School

had held an annual athletic meeting for many years before the modern fondness for these exhibitions became developed. To meet the expenses of this display, each boy was obliged to contribute according to the form to which he belonged, there being a regular scale of contributions, the highest rate being in the sixth form, and the lowest in the first. There were of course, besides, entrance-money and costume to be provided. It was at this time *de rigueur* for the competitors to array themselves in costumes more magnificent than useful. Schoolboy criticism is at all times rather severe than just; and on the sports' day those who failed to reach the standard of dress fixed by the self-appointed critics had their "rig" most unmercifully discussed. Its material, ornaments, and cut were the objects of criticisms showing an early promise of invective that has been in some cases fulfilled. It was noticeable that the owners of the prettiest costumes were by no means prominent performers. It is a matter for rejoicing that gaudy costumes have been supplanted by the workmanlike dress now used. My father readily gave us the extra money required for these sports, though I believe that at first he did not altogether understand the matter.

They had no such gatherings in his school-days, and it was not till some years after that athletic sports became ordinary amusements. At all events he "stumped up," though his large family and heavy expenses did not leave him much loose cash for sundry accounts. He also provided us with the means for cricketing, for which game he had great respect though he had never been a good player. He considered it the national English game, and watched his boys' progress with great interest. Football he did not "cotton" to quite as readily. In his school-days there was practised a most unscientific form of the game; the only ascertainable object of the players being to kick the ball themselves, to prevent others doing it, which, as everyone kicked in the same direction, was not a matter of much moment. Formerly, at Kensington School, the Rugby game was played in its entirety, its distinctive features of hacking and tripping being much cultivated. Perhaps it is not surprising that parents should not have shown much interest for the game which sent their sons home with a nice collection of bruises and "hacks." As a rule the parents thought a good deal more of the damage than the sons.

My father allowed us to play the game if we wished to, only remarking that it was a very strange game which caused so much suffering. Later, when the sensible rules of the Rugby Union were generally adopted, he became an enthusiast in football, the mysteries of which he had by now learnt from his boys. He knew too much about the inevitable risk of all sports to complain of the accidents which sometimes occur at football, though the rate of accidents is very low when the number who play is considered.

Even when a bachelor my father had not been fond of late hours, though circumstances compelled him to go through more late work than he cared for. After his marriage he joined the Garrick Club, being one of the earliest, if not one of the original members. For some years the smoking-room of the Garrick was admitted to be the cosiest in London, and my father frequently went there to smoke his cigar and join in the conversation of the eminent authors, artists, and actors who then formed the majority of the club. The nearness of his house at Charing Cross made the Garrick specially convenient for him. Here he was introduced to a great many celebrated men, with some of whom he became intimate. After

some time he found out that the Garrick kept him up later than he thought was right, and on this account he withdrew from the club when he removed to Kensington. The calls of his profession, and his fondness for domestic pleasures, prevented his going into society to the extent he might have done had he wished. His social intercourse did not amount to more than an occasional dinner with some intimate friend, usually at a club. Sometimes he would spend a Sunday in the country, but he preferred his Sunday at home. Of late years he very rarely went out after the performance; sometimes he would have a quiet dinner at home for his Manchester friends, whom he was always glad to see. He had a great many private friends in Manchester, including, among others, Mr. Cope, Mr. Sudlow, Mr. Eckkersley, and Mr. John Wike, the partner of the late Mr. Brown in the proprietorship of the Prince's Theatre, Manchester. He had received such marks of esteem, both from the Manchester public and from his private friends there, that he very naturally had a great attachment for the town; yet, on the occasion of the Haymarket company's first visit there, in the year 1852–3, when he had made a great hit in his original character of Blenkinsop,

he left Manchester, having made but one new acquaintance (Mr. Smith, of the Palatine Hotel) in the whole course of his stay. The Manchester men certainly made up for their oversight in after years. Another cause for his retired mode of life was the simplicity of his tastes. He was no *gourmet*. Of course no man who had seen as much of life as he had could help appreciating a good dinner; but though he could occasionally enjoy a dinner in the epicurean sense, yet a series of dinners always disagreed with him. His palate was naturally too healthy to be satisfied with the artificial diet of these days, and he always returned to his plain dinner with increased zest. As to his reading at this time, he had still less opportunity for it than he had when he was at Charing Cross. Of course "study" demanded his freshest powers; and while I am on the subject of study, a few words on his method will be appropriate. Learning the words of a new part, though he usually did this first, was the least important division of his process. The other division by which he arrived at his conception—the character—was the really essential process. His practice was to read the whole part most carefully, and then to think over it deeply and frequently. His

view of a new part was not adopted after a few minutes' or a few hours' reflection. He was constantly thinking of the character during the time of learning the words, while he was walking to and from the theatre, at odd times through the day, and very often he would ponder on it while he smoked his last pipe after the performance. There was a certain degree of deliberate appointed consideration of the new part, but much more time was given at short intervals, principally, I believe, for the purpose of considering the matter in as many different moods as possible. He corrected the impression of one part of the day by the criticism of a later hour; he would often reject a rendering which had been adopted for some time, and choose another which he had become convinced was more truthful.

This careful attention will account for the signs of thought shown in his later original parts, subordinate though they often were. During the last period of his life his reading was *The Times.* Without agreeing altogether with Mr. Cobbett's opinion about the relative values of a single copy of *The Times* and the works of Thucydides, I may say that it would be difficult to find reading more

suited to the opportunities and tastes of a busy professional man. The freedom from professional and domestic cares, and the regular leisure which are necessary even for the amateur in literature, are but seldom granted to hard-worked actors with large families. As a general rule my father's daily reading was restricted to the afternoon and a short time at night after he came home from the theatre. *The Times* is singularly adapted to a man so situated. In its telegraphic news, accounts of meetings, parliamentary and legal reports, it satisfies the modern curiosity about everything in the most thorough manner. It gratifies the interest which we all take in what is going on now—that fondness, sometimes unconscious, for being acquainted with the life of the times in which we live. Of course this taste can be abused, but *au fond* it is both rational and natural. In spite of the risk of being charged with "gilding refined gold," I will refer to the excellence of *The Times*' foreign correspondence, and I do so because my father always read this correspondence carefully, and believed that by it he was kept acquainted with the progress of foreign nations, materially and politically as well as in literature or art. It is probable

that the classes in England of great importance on account of their wealth, their influence, and in a less degree for their intelligence and knowledge, depend almost entirely on *The Times* correspondents' letters for their impressions and opinions about foreign countries.

Englishmen owe a great debt of gratitude to the conductors and contributors of *The Times* for the ability they have shown in keeping their readers well posted in the state of other countries. In the "leaders" of *The Times* my father took great pleasure, especially delighting in the clear common-sense manner, free at once from crotchets and from prejudice, with which social topics are treated. He called them "essays in miniature," and read them as much for the purpose of satisfying his literary taste as for the subjects they discussed. The political articles gave him the sort of enjoyment to be gained by a good-humoured opponent from having the arguments in favour of the opposite side stated in a style always forcible, usually clever, and sometimes witty. It says a great deal for the great attachment Englishmen have for their largest journal that so many people should subscribe to a paper to whose political opinion

they are utterly opposed. To a certain extent the remedy is in their own hands—they can leave the political articles unread; and there are not a few instances of men regularly reading every leader but the political. I must here say a little about my father's political views. His father, though a Nonconformist, was a Tory, but his sons did not take their political opinions directly from him, my uncles Stephen and Morell both being Liberals. My father had left home too early to be much influenced by his father's political ideas. In the course of his early training in the country, he came in contact with men of every shade of political opinion.

He was always fond of rational discussion, and took every opportunity of learning both sides of the question, for at that time he had no dogmatic creed of politics; the reading he did at a later time determined to a large extent his politics. He had many warm encounters over politics with his brother Stephen, who greatly desired him to adopt the so-called "Liberal" opinions; but my father was more convinced by his own independent inquiries and reading, so that he ultimately became a thorough Conservative. This is scarcely the place for discussing theories of politics,

but I may briefly state that my father's main reason for rejecting Liberalism was, that he preferred trusting to the party supported by the classes who had most to lose than to the party which would put power into the hands of the classes most likely, from their ignorance, poverty, and jealousy, to make a selfish use of it.

While he was a bachelor, and also during his life at Charing Cross, he would, by the introduction of his press friends, frequently visit the reporters' gallery of the House of Commons. He had heard most of the celebrated speakers of his time, and, in his judgment, gave the palm for oratory to the late Earl of Derby, then Lord Stanley. For this great statesman he had a most affectionate respect, inspired by the rare union of great ability with an ardent chivalrous nature, that made Earl Derby so much beloved by his countrymen. He had read all the early works of Lord Beaconsfield, and thoroughly admitted their great merits; though, for himself, he preferred his politics and his romance separate; somewhat like Grimaldi, who one morning presented himself at his milkman's with two jugs—one for the milk and one for the water. His favourite works

were "Vivian Grey" and "Henrietta Temple." For the courage, perseverance, and abilities of our present premier he had a deep admiration, and had followed his career—probably unique among those of English politicians—with unremitting interest. I have before referred to the manly simplicity of my father's mind, of his distaste for subtleties; so that the reader will not be surprised to learn that he regretted that Mr. Disraeli should have been compelled to adopt the weapons of his adversaries, and substitute a "leap in the dark" for constitutional progress. He was much delighted with the result of the last election, which so completely falsified the confident assertions of the demagogues who had been proclaiming England to be a democratic country. The strength of the Conservative party in able administrators was another cause for satisfaction. Though he had felt the burdens of war during the Crimean campaigns, and was not prone to underrate their severity, he none the less advocated going to war for the purpose of protecting English interests, and curtailing the threatening progress of Russian power. Of late years he frequently read *The Saturday Review*, and thoroughly appreciated the clear-sighted spirit and incisive style

of its articles. Some papers that appeared two or three years ago, on the former state of western districts of London, hit his taste for historical writing. There were also some articles on the conditions of dramatic literature in the Elizabethan age, which he thought gave a very truthful account of the surroundings of the drama in those days.

During his frequent railway journeys and his stay in provincial towns, where he knew few people, he took the opportunity of reading some of the best-known modern works. Among these were Dr. Holland's Memoirs, Crabb Robinson's Diary, the Greville Memoirs, and the novels of Mr. Black and Mr. Blackmore. To everyone it has occurred to find some unaccountable omission in his reading; in the case of my father, Dryden was the author which, by some curious chance, he had never read. Possibly a pleasure deferred is a pleasure increased, and most certainly it was so in this case. He read Dryden's works in Bell's three-volume edition during one of his country tours, and said that he could not recollect having read anything of late years that had given him greater pleasure. The sterling force of Dryden's vigorous verse harmonised well with my father's robust turn of mind.

Another omission was "Adam Bede." This he read about ten years ago, and joined with the large class of cultivated readers in an unhesitating recognition of the marvellous genius of the writer. "The Mill on the Floss" and "Silas Marner" he subsequently read, but they did not displace "Adam Bede" in his estimation. For the later works of George Eliot he had the same admiration, though, like many others, thought that the preponderance given to philosophic commentary, and the unusual length of the novels, served to weaken the reader's interest in the plot and characters. He had not time to devote to the elaborate study which "Middlemarch" and "Daniel Deronda" require before their special nature can be grasped.

While at Manchester, in 1873, he came across Wendell Holmes's "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table." The find was particularly fortunate, as he had been disappointed by the local librarian. The *savoir faire*, shrewd humour, genuine pathos, and varied learning, all so happily combined, made his perusal of this book an undiluted pleasure. He was accustomed to say that the style of Dr. Holmes was too concentrated for anyone to read much of it at one time profitably, and it required careful mental digestion. The prolonged

suffering of his last illness was occasionally alleviated by the perusal of the same writer's "The Guardian Angel." He thought this one of the most charming modern novels, and was surprised that its merits were not more widely known. When I mention "The Coming Race," "Kenelm Chillingley," an occasional number of the *Quarterly*, *Academy*, or *Athenæum*, I shall have near exhausted the list of his later reading. He was much amused at the name of Mr. Compton being given to the tragedian in "Kenelm Chillingley," whose character was not flattering to his namesake, particularly as he had slightly known Lord Lytton. He explained it by suggesting that the author intended to create a strong contrast between the real and imaginary Mr. Comptons.

Though his presence in society was rare, yet his many eminent social qualities, in addition to the celebrity of a leading actor, made him very popular. The chief cause of his popularity was an ability for speechmaking, an accomplishment which rarity makes doubly valuable. On the occasion of the wedding of a daughter of his old friend Mr. Chester, and at a ball given by Mr. Ansdell, another friend of his early days, he made speeches which occasioned great laughter

among the guests and universal praise for himself. His knowledge of painting was but vague, still he had a strong natural fondness for pictures. He made it a rule to visit the Academy several times each season, and often found his unskilled preference borne out by the opinions of acknowledged art critics. For the domestic pictures of children and babies in pictorial attitudes he had a strong dislike. His favourites were F. Walker, Leighton, Poynter, Brett, Cooper, and Calderon. He did not fail to visit the winter exhibitions so successfully instituted at the Academy of late years. Among past English artists, Hogarth and Sir Joshua Reynolds were his prime favourites; and among foreign old masters, Vandyck, Hobbema, Ruysdael, Velasquez, Murillo, Titian, and Leonardo da Vinci were those he preferred. The indefiniteness of this description will perhaps amuse the connoisseur, but it is only stated to show what his particular taste was. It should be remembered that he always said he knew nothing of the technicalities of art, and could only judge by the consonance with nature and life shown by the different pictures.

In the management of his family he endeavoured to combine firmness with indulgence. His warmly

affectionate disposition and his fondness for children, together with his high sense of parental duty and his lofty moral standard, caused him to manage his family in a manner that attained the success it deserved. He made himself the companion of his children to an extent rare even in domestic England; in their sports as well as in their work, in their difficulties as in their pleasures, he was ever ready to share, advise, or assist. He has left them the memory of a father whose devotion and love may have been equalled but never excelled. In the recollection of a life honourable, patient, and active, animated by a strong sense of responsibility, free from sordid aims and mean actions, he has given them a model which must be both an incentive to exertion and a guide to conduct.

He was for many years a regular attendant at Kensington (old) Parish Church, and afterwards at St. Stephen's, Kensington. In this, as in many other details of his life, he gave a silent and effectual reproof to those bigots whose pre-eminent virtue has prompted them to include all actors in a condemnation as sweeping and narrow as it is irrational and presumptuous. He would never stoop to reply to the

coarse insults of this class, believing that they were the results of ignorance acting on mean natures.

His last illness, cancer, was painfully prolonged, but uniformly borne with a manly resignation that but increased the admiration of those who saw him. He was surprised and excessively delighted at the proof of the high esteem he was held in which was given by the glorious results of the London and Manchester benefits. He had not of late years been very much spoken of, and the warm response given to the appeal on his behalf was doubly sweet. In the cordial and generous support of his fellow-actors, in the exertions of the celebrated dramatic authors, and the articles in the chief newspapers of the day—all done for his sake—he had a reward for his severe toil and self-respecting career which touched him the more deeply because it was unexpected. His death occurred on September 15th, 1877, at the age of seventy-two years.

He was spared that most affecting ordeal, namely, taking leave of the stage. As Hazlitt says, "the very gaiety and popularity which surround the life of a leading actor make the retiring from it a serious

business." Thackeray has thus described this last scene:

> The play is done, the curtain drops,
> Slow falling to the prompter's bell;
> A moment yet the actor stops,
> And looks around to say farewell.
> It is an irksome word and task,
> And when he's laughed and said his say;
> He shows, as he removes the mask,
> A face that's anything but gay!

All that the most unremitting attention of a devoted wife, all that medical skill, the sympathy of hosts of friends, and the unanimous regard of the public could do to alleviate his sufferings, was (in all honour be it said) lavished upon him. He died, as he had lived, loved, admired, and respected by all. A friend and brother-actor thus speaks of the professional regard that was felt for him: "Having been for five-and-twenty years the familiar and *combibo* of actors not wholly averse to scandal, I have a melancholy satisfaction in bearing testimony to the absolute immunity of his name from disparagement or sneer in those keen-eared circles. 'His life,' like the noblest Roman's, 'was gentle.' May it prove a legacy worthily upheld."

The "Compton Benefits" at Drury Lane Theatre,

London, and at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, with their splendid lists of subscriptions, were, at the time, sufficiently noticed; but I have not yet mentioned the gracious kindness of Her Majesty the Queen, who may not be unwilling to learn from one of the family that her inquiries went far to soothe my father's bed of pain.

Among the many articles that appeared in the London and provincial papers at the time of his benefit, perhaps the one that pleased my father most was the following, which appeared in the shape of a letter to "Punch:"

MY DEAR MR. EDITOR,

I write this time, not with a contribution, but with a view of inducing contributions. I read this morning with real sorrow of the severe illness of Mr. Compton, and the urgency of some movement on his behalf. Now, I shall certainly send my subscription in some form or other, but it has occurred to me that there must be many, like myself, to whom a monster benefit performance, shared by all the stars in London, presents no particular attraction; and who would much rather give through some other channel.

Could not an ordinary subscription list be issued, quite apart from the proposed Drury Lane performance, and advertised in the daily papers? I by no means desire a stall or a box for the benefit, but I *do* desire to offer my guinea or two for the benefit of an actor who, more than any living comedian, has helped me and thousands of others to understand certain sides of Shakespearean comedy, and who is, furthermore, one of the truest, most self-respected, most artistic actors the stage in our time has seen.

If this hint is likely to be of any service to the committee, and to the cause they plead, pray make any use of it you please; though I do not care that my name should appear.

Yours faithfully,

A CLERGYMAN OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

(Who is also a student and lover of Shakespeare).

In conclusion, I should like to draw attention to my father's long connection with the "Old Court Suburb" of Kensington. It will be a long time before his upright figure, his firm walk, his bright smile, and his cheery greeting are forgotten by Kensingtonians.

The object of the previous pages has been to give the account of a life passed in a trying profession, of an artist who had never been daunted by the difficulties of his calling, and of a man who had constantly maintained a high standard of conduct. Henry Compton has shown, what has been shown before by such men as Charles Kean and Macready, but which always has a special value, that an English actor could be also an English gentleman, and that the pursuit of a maligned profession has no invariable tendency to degrade its disciples. If his life and career should animate to high aims and unflagging perseverance another generation of actors, it will not have been destitute of permanent value.

CHAPTER IX.

LETTERS.

Manchester, Aug. 6th, 1868.

MY DARLING EMMY,

I write to you before Percy, as you are the lady. I was very glad to have a letter from my little maid, for I know she rather likes her papa, and it would not be a very severe task to her. That cheeky fellow Eddy has hinted something about Ford's baths—that's a cool card, that is. Well, I shall send mamma some money on Monday, to lay out in little treats for little people—the boys in baths, and the younger ones in the way mamma thinks best.

I am glad you have got rid of little squirrel. He was getting a naughty, nasty, biting little fellow, and I am afraid some of you would have felt his teeth before long.

I had a letter from Katie, who seems to be enjoying

herself at Crawley. It will be your turn to go visiting when you get a great big saucy girl.

I am sorry to hear poor Podge* has been poorly. What does he mean by a cold such weather as this? If he had had a *hot*, I should not have been surprised. Give my love to him and Siddy, and tell them I often think of them both, and want to see them, but it's no use wanting just yet. Love to Percy; tell him I will write to him next. We are all used up here, but we shall all get right next month, I hope. Give my love to mamma, and to the big boys.

Your very affectionate

PAPA.

10, Belle Vue, Bradford, Yorkshire,
August.

MY DEAR CHARLEY,

I enclose you the necessary directions for securing your berth on board the Edinburgh steamer.

Saturday week will be your day for starting, and then you will get in in the morning as we arrive in the evening or afternoon. I am going to write by

* Nickname of his son Walter.

this post to my landlady in Edinboro', and I have no doubt all will be right.

Best love to mamma and all our party.

Your affectionate

PAPA.

235, Brunswick Street, Manchester,
July 28th, 1869.

MY DEAREST LITTLE EMMY,

I am sorry I had no time to write to you sooner, especially as you wrote to me so soon; indeed, if I had not gone by express, I believe your letter would have got to L'pool before me.

I was delighted with the little buckets (bouquets) you sent me; they were plummy little buckets—a trifle faded when they reached me, but very nice little buckets for all that, and particularly acceptable, as they came out of your garden.

You want to know whether you may gather flowers from our garden? Certainly, dear, as many as you please.

I suppose you're home for the holidays now. What *do* you do with your little self? Oh, I know; practise on the top of the piano all the morning, and mend stockings the rest of the day. What jolly holidays!

Give my love to mamma, and tell her I am getting all right, I hope. I had two nights' rest, which have improved me a good deal.

Love to the rest, and tell them, now I have begun, I hope to write to them all in their turns.

Your very affectionate

PAPA.

Manchester, Aug. 10th, 1869.

MY DEAR GOOD, I MEAN NAUGHTY—NO,

I MEAN RUMMY—LITTLE WALLY,

How are you, my pippin, and how is the garden? Very wet, I suppose. When the weather gets better you must ask mamma to take you some little trip to Kew, or the Crystal Palace, or Richmond, or Kensington Gardens, or somewhere. Tell mamma I will stand treat if you can contrive anything in the excursion way. Here's a bit of news for you, which I forgot to mention in my last two or three letters home. Kendal and Miss Robertson were married on Saturday.

Give my love to Henry, and tell him I knew he would not mind my writing to you chaps first.

Your affectionate

PAPA.

Glasgow, Sept. 24th, 1869.

MY DARLING LITTLE EMMY,

I am very glad that I have the opportunity of wishing you many, many happy returns of your birthday; may every one find you happy and happier every year. May you find that by your knowledge you are wiser, and may I live to see you improving every year, till you become a good, clever, accomplished little lady.

I have sent you, by Charley, a brooch, which, though not very showy, will, I think, suit my little maid, and be quiet and becoming. When I get home again we will keep the day in due form, and see if we cannot all make ourselves very ill with nasty pastry and fruit.

Charley is gone up the Clyde to-day. He has had dreadfully mortifying weather—so much so, that at one time we were afraid he would do neither the lakes nor the Clyde. He will now have done both. Give my love to Katie, and tell her I hope to hear a good account of her soon. Tell Henry I received his letter this morning, and a rum one it is—like all his epistles.

Give my best love to Wally and Siddy. Charley

will tell Siddy what his present is, and Wally must tell me what I am to bring him. I can't meet with the illuminated affair yet, but I suppose I shall at Birmingham.

Give my love to Eddy, and thank him for his letter. I suppose I shall hear of his pranks next week when I return to Manchester.

Make a nice little birthday of it to-morrow, and we will improve upon it when I get back again.

Rain, rain again; nothing but rain,

Good-bye, my darling girl.

Your affectionate

PAPA.

Manchester, August 22nd, 1870.

MY DEAR CHARLEY,

As your turn has arrived for receiving my answer, I am glad to find an opportunity for tipping you a line.

I was very glad to hear from both your letters that you have been working at something. It is true that no practical results have attended your labours, but it is satisfactory to feel that one has done one's best. . . . .

You will be glad to hear that our business is considerably improved; we had a capital house on Friday and Saturday. I will tell you all about the papers and the piece when I see you. If I am right in my calculations, Mr. Podge's turn comes next, and I hope to write to him before long, and then E. Because my time was not occupied enough, I must go and promise to sit for my likeness, which operation occupies all my mornings. Give my love to mamma and all the naughty ones,

Your affectionate

FATHER.

Manchester, August 26th, 1870.

MY DEAREST EMMY,

You have been so very good in writing early and often, that though I am rather pressed for time I feel bound to send you a letter, even if a hurried one.

I think, as you wish to know, that your handwriting is very much improved indeed, and with care will be a really fine handwriting. I see, however, you have a pretty way of making hay with your words, tossing them about over the heads of those in line, as if you were determined on leaving out important

words in the first edition and inserting them afterwards in all sorts of odd places. I prefer uniformity, if you please, miss. I have sent you lots of papers to-day, as you seem to like the notice in *The Guardian.*

I am delighted beyond measure to hear you have a new kitten; now my earthly happiness is complete. I don't know about the name—why Dickson? but no doubt you have some cogent reason. I suppose you will sit up for me on Sunday night, but if you feel too tired please get to bed and I will see you the next morning, and then you will only see a dilapidated old pappy with no flesh on his bones.

Give my best love to mamma and the rising generation at home.

Your very affectionate

PAPA.

11, Plough and Harrow Road,

Sunday.

DEAR MR. WALTER OTWAY,

You are a respectful young chap, you are, to address your father as a "pippin." I wish you could prove him a golden pippin, you young codlin.

Nevertheless and notwithstanding, I was very glad to hear from you and all about your exams. I suppose I shall be agreeably astounded with the prizes, and marks, and things you will have to show me when I get home. All right; I can stand a good deal of that. You did not tell me when you were to break up; I suppose one day this week. But you can still go on with your lessons, you know, just for the fun of the thing. What a jolly lark, eh?

No news here, except wretched, awful weather; a dirty town, and equally dirty people in it. Give my love to all, and tell them I am longing to see them, which I hope to do this day week. Tell Sid I want to hear him read, so much improved as he is becoming.

So no more at this here present time.

Your affectionate

PAPA.

243, Bath Street, Glasgow,
Nov. 22nd, 1870.

MY DEAR WALTER, OTWAY, WALHAM GREEN,

Those two or three letters you sent me have not arrived yet, but perhaps you can remember what you said in them; put them all in one and let me

have it before I leave; or, if too busy, tell me about it when I get back. I think I may have a day or two at home before we open at Birmingham.

I suppose you have been doing wonders at school since I left. Got lots of *optimés* and going in for lots of prizes and lots of hacks at football. I shall be precious glad to get out of this place; I never was so sick of a town in my life, but I daresay I shall enjoy my Christmas all the more for having such a dismal autumn, that is if my little boys and girls are good, and if they are not I can have a jolly day of whipping them all round, which I shall feel a pleasure in doing, especially in beginning with Walham and Sidham (Sydney). Give my love to Siddy, and tell him I received his letter and was delighted with it, as it contained so much news and was not at all difficult to make out.

Give my love to Eddy and tell him *the Kensington News* arrived safe with his friend's "puff" of his acting and Henry's Mrs. Bouncer. A rum exhibition it must have been altogether. Give my love to mamma and all my troubles.

Your affectionate

PAPA.

27, Brunswick Street, Dublin,
March 19th, 1871.

MY DEAR LITTLE EMMY,

I am making use of the first opportunity to answer your last letter. It was a very nice letter and I enjoyed it very much. You will be glad to hear I have got into very nice lodgings at last, indeed the best I ever had in Ireland—in fact they are what you call "plummy."

The weather here has been for the last two days quite mild, and to-day it is beautifully fine, which is a great boon to me, as I hope to get a little fresh air, which, from incessant work, I have not had an opportunity of doing yet.

I am glad to hear you are all well, and, as far as I can gather, behaving well, which you know is a great comfort to papa. I have sent off some papers for you *little ones.* I don't know whether you like being included among the *little ones,* but I have addressed one to you. Good-bye, my darling good girl.

Always your affectionate

PAPA.

Dublin, March 23rd, 1871.

MY DEAR CHARLEY,

I shall, I find, just contrive to save my credit with you, and get a letter despatched before I return

to town; I suppose I shall be obliged to bring one up with me to H——, unless I can write to-morrow.

I have nothing of interest to communicate to you, for you have all the interesting subjects in your locality. Here it is flat, stale, and unprofitable to a degree quite depressing; it seems as if all the fun and hilarity of the Irish character have left the country, and some other had borrowed it during Lent. I am not much given to punning, but that has popped out accidentally.

You say nothing about business and the City, so I suppose all is going on quietly and much as usual. Thank you for *The Athenæum*; the criticism on the critic was just and full of truth, in fact it took my view of the subject, as you know, and that is saying a great deal in its favour. I have also to thank you for *The Weekly Times*, which, though containing a great deal of truth, was rather contradictory, and left me in doubt as to their having any definite opinion at all. As I have sent all the others newspapers of some description, I thought it nothing but fair that Katie and you should have one, so I posted a "Punch" and a "Blarney" to-day, without knowing anything of the contents of either, but you must take them as you find them; let's hope you will find

something in them. Give my love to Katie, and tell her I am quite grieved at her disappointment at not going to ——; poor girl, she seems doomed to be disappointed this year one way and another. I hope there is some treat in store for her, to make up for all these blanks. Give my love to mamma, and distribute my affectionate regards all round the family, taking your own share.

Your affectionate

FATHER.

235, Brunswick Street, Manchester,
Saturday.

MY DEAREST EMMY,

I was delighted at so soon receiving a letter from you, and to find you are again so happily housed in your second home with your dear kind friends. Give my love to my little pet E——, and tell her I am so happy, as I am grateful, to hear she is superintending your music; thank her very much for me. I have seen a great deal of Katie in the mornings; she will have such a lot to tell you when she writes to you, but I will be beforehand with her in one instance —she was at a dance last night, at the M——'s, where she met the Burmese Ambassadors, and she dines with me to-morrow at Mrs. W——'s. We are getting on well here, but the weather is very depressing

to everybody, it rains every day as regular as the day comes. Friends are as kind as usual, though I am too busy to see much of them. I am sorry to hear Aunt —— is ill; give my love to her, and tell her I will take it as a favour if she will get well at once. What a silly old papa I am!—I am really wanting to see you again already, though it is little more than a week since I left you at Barnes. I hear from Eddy that you have had three nice days together, and Siddy specially enjoyed it. I fancy that this term you will make great progress, for you are now just at the age to feel the value of knowledge and appreciate the advantages you are enjoying. I am sure you will work hard and be a clever little Emmy, for poor papa's sake.

How does the garden get on? You must ask mamma to let you buy some plants if uncle does not send us any; but perhaps that will do when I get back, though that will not be for a month.

Good-bye, my little darling.

Always your affectionate

PAPA.

Give my love to P—— S——.

MY DARLING EMMY,

I see you are determined to have another letter

before I get home, you exacting little puss. However, I like writing to you very much when I have time; and you deserve an answer to your last two pretty and interesting letters.

I have seen very little of Kate down here, but she has been thoroughly enjoying herself, I assure you.

Give my love to F—— and E——, and tell them I have seen B—— several times, and that he is growing a fine young man, and almost as handsome as Uncle Charley.

Thank you very much for your pretty flower. You will be grieved to hear it was a little faded when it reached me, but I put it on my mantelpiece, and pretended it was as fresh as when it was in your garden.

I hope to bring Katie up on Sunday afternoon; then I shall have a sight of you and a kiss from you the same evening; but it is not quite settled yet.

Good-bye, darling girl.

Always your affectionate

PAPA.

Edinborough, June 19th, 1872.

MY DEAR CHARLEY,

As you were the first in the field, you deserve to be the first answered; besides, I have two letters to acknowledge from you—thank you for both.

From the style of your composition, you seem to have inherited the family faculty of letter-writing which we had the credit for some years ago, though what little I have is getting rusty from want of practice. For fear this should be the case with you, you had better keep up a running fire with me while I am away—fine opening for a young man! I find we shall be in Manchester on the 19th of August; won't that be rather late for you? I had a thoroughly miserable fortnight at Glasgow—everything against me; besides, I find myself getting dead-beat. I saw a doctor I had met at Sothern's. He offered me advice; but I want what no doctor can give me—rest; but I must not think of it. You will be grieved to hear I have one of your white pocket-handkerchiefs, which I am doing my best to wear out before I return it.

It was not "Barchester Towers" I read, but the "Last Chronicle of Barset." Good story, but overlaid with extraneous matter, characters, and incident, which prolonged the tale *ad nauseam*, as we say. Since then I have read "A True Reformer" in "Blackwood."

I hope to write to mamma to-morrow, and the rest of the family in turn, as they have written to me. You had better direct to the Theatre Royal, as before,

as I am not comfortable in my lodgings, and must change them if I am to get any rest. Love to all.

Your affectionate

FATHER.

19, Westmoreland Terrace, Newcastle,
July 4th, 1872.

MY DEAR CHARLIE,

I should have written to you last night, but was too tired; and it was just as well, for I should have been obliged to write again to-day. Mr. Green,* I see, is rather sweet on his playing lately, and reminds me of my promise of getting him a bat—you know he never went without anything for want of speaking up. I enclose you a P.O.O. for the amount; and I should also like you to get Siddy a leaping-pole, if you can forage out the right place to go to for it. You will use your judgment in selecting a strong but not too heavy an article.

I was delighted with the article in the *Quarterly* —the best thing of the kind we have had since the days of Charles Lamb and Hazlitt. If you still go to the Museum, read on Byron in this month's "Blackwood." I am delighted with Dryden, and was going to the second and third vols., but they say that the

* Nickname of his son Walter.

publishers have called them in. See if you can get the last vols., and bring them down with you.

The Times I send you will find interesting—Miall's mull, Gladstone's speech, and Livingstone's discovery. I don't always get *The Times* in these outlandish districts, but when I do I send it.

I will get the needful for the "French Opera Globe," and send it in time.

Fix your own time for being in Manchester on, or rather after, the 6th of August.

So no more at present.

Your affectionate

FATHER.

28, Seymour Street, Liverpool,
July 23rd, 1872.

MY DEAR CHARLEY,

I am glad to have an opportunity of answering your letter so soon, for I am getting dreadfully involved with the other branches of the family. I am sorry to say I am let in for more rehearsals. This is not the weather for study or playing new parts—we are bringing out "Cyril's Success," and be hanged to it. This will, I am afraid, prevent my writing to the others just yet.

Give my love to Siddy, and tell him I am delighted

with his letter and still more with his prizes, and will write very soon. Love to Mr. Green, who is evidently going to write soon. Have you got the leaping-pole yet? This is a cruel change from the air of Nottingham, and with heat and the stuffiness of the place I feel cruelly let down. I told mamma what I thought of "The Gentleman's Magazine," which opinion you are welcome to second-hand. This place is as horrible as ever; I always hated it, and it seems worse than ever; but I have one comfort—I know nobody in it, and can keep quiet this broiling weather. So no more at this present writing.

Your affectionate

FATHER.

Birmingham, August 29th, 1872.

MY DEAR WALLEY,

I am so sorry I could not answer your two letters sooner. I think I told you how pleased I was with the way you came off at the examinations. You must have worked well and pluckily, and will one day feel the full benefit of it in more ways than one; and I am sure it will be rather a nice reflection to think you have given a great deal of pleasure to the "Old Man." It was very good of you to set the garden to rights; I suppose it was a dry job, and I must stand

some *beer* when I come back, but really it seems as if I never should. I am quite tired of knocking about. Did Charlie tell you I have a knife for you and one for Siddy? I thought you would both like to cut your fingers about and take a slice off one of your thumbs. We have got the "Claimant" here, he looks as much like a fat butcher as ever, but I don't think he has got much money out of the Brummagers here. You seem to be having a good go in at Walter Scott. Do you know why he is so clever?—Because he is a namesake of yours. Ha, ha, ha!

I am glad to see you write so good a hand, my man; your first letter was really very good indeed. I think Eddy's turn comes next, or rather Katie's. Tell both, with my love, they will soon hear from me. Love to mamma, and Emmie, and Charlie, and Siddy, and auntie.

Yours truly,

H. COMPTON.

Sept. 3rd, '74.

MY DEAR NED,

So you are determined to inveigle me into a correspondence; "'tain't, right, you know." I can read letters with great pleasure, but writing them is quite

another pair of shoes. So you're a-going it, you are, as Romeo, Iago, Claude, *cum multis aliis.* What on earth could the performance of the above three parts have been like? I think of writing to Soden and asking him. But, chaffing apart, I met Mr. J. B. Howard at the Gaiety the other evening, and he spoke most kindly of you, and prophesied very favourably of your future career. I would rather you had climbed the ladder more slowly and steadily; "They stumble," etc.; but it has been good hard practice, and you will get into more steady work at Newcastle, better than "doing the lead" within the twelvemonth of starting. Don't let this "flash-in-the-pan" sort of work unsteady you for quiet, even, thoughtful practice, which is more important. By-the-bye, I think it would be advisable for you to call yourself Mr. Edward Compton, in full, after this engagement; you will find it will prevent mistakes in the profession. We are obliged to have the house thoroughly cleaned, painted, and papered; so mamma and three of the kids are going to a farmhouse near Margate, on Monday. They all send lots of love. Katie will write at the beginning of the week, so will mamma, though she says a letter from you is due to her, but she makes allowance for your tremendous work lately. Siddy is very much

excited at the parts you have been playing. Wally takes it coolly. Emmy is going to write soon. Come, I think I have made rather a part of this, so "exit L. H. U. E.," rather sweet on his performance, and the way it has been gone through.

Your affectionate

FATHER.

Wednesday.

MY DEAR NED,

I don't know what you and your professional friends are thinking about when they advise you to take not only an injudicious but an impossible step. You don't suppose —— and —— would for a moment entertain the idea of letting you off with a stamped engagement staring them in the face, and within a month of opening? Now for the other view of the question. I should not entertain it for a moment. Your friends may tell you, and with a kind feeling believe you equal to an engagement of the sort proposed in London, but I should think it a very dangerous experiment to cheek a London public in such a style of theatre and entertainment and at such a paltry salary. It would be doing what —— and other men have done—come up too soon, and been

obliged to go back into the country to finish their practical education, being literally "rusticated." This sort of thing is not to be done at a leap. Light comedy is not learnt by playing two or three parts in second-rate theatres. I have a strong impression you are getting on right well, and have got the stuff in you; all the more important that you should perfect yourself by thoughtful study and painstaking practice, so that, when you open, wait your opportunity to appear in a first-class London theatre, and let us see an accomplished actor with the real "finish" about him, which is not picked up in a twelvemonth. I did not get home from a visit to mamma and the chicks in time to answer your letter yesterday. I am terribly involved in paint and whitewash, to say nothing of that interesting article, the scrubbing-brush, which is following us through all the rooms.

Your affectionate

FATHER.

Last day of this 'ere year.

MY DEAR NED,

You may think me a cold-blooded, unnatural "parient" for not writing oftener, but you must remember I never undertook to keep up a running correspondence with any of my running-away fellows.

Besides, I have not the pen of a ready writer; at all events, the pen never seems ready. I am sorry to hear you have been seedy; more sorry than surprised, for I know what an ungenial climate that Newcastle is—I know it to my cost. I hope you have weathered the attack by this time. You certainly have overworked yourself; but I fancy, with youth in your favour, you will soon find yourself yourself again. If you don't feel strong, there's nothing like steel drops, or iron in some form or other taken continually. Go to a first-rate chemist and ask for the best class of steel drops, and take ten drops in a wineglass of water soon after meals three times a day; and after a few days you may increase them to fifteen and twenty drops three times per diem, and it will soon make a man of you. This from H. Compton, M.R.C.S., physician to his own family. Now for professional matters. I would rather, in some respects, you had been out of the pantomime; yet, in other respects, it is good for you—just one of the means of rubbing off the corners and giving stage ease—a very important, nay, essential element of dramatic training. But of course you won't do it again. We have got some very nice, gentlemanly young fellows on the stage now, with many personal requisites and education to

back them, but who, from want of the training you are now getting, I will undertake to say will never make "actors" as long as they live.

We are all of us delighted at the wonderful success of "Hamlet," showing so plainly as it does the palpable change of the public taste in favour of the drama. You know how often I have predicted its return, though I did not expect it so soon. Encouraging for you, old man! We had but a sorry Christmas compared with old times; but we have a great deal to be thankful for, and let us hope we are so. The boys and Emmy are out skating, but I don't care to face the fog, having a lively recollection of getting my first attack of bronchitis that way on the Serpentine. I shan't forget your birthday. Mamma sends best love, and says she will write soon. Come, I think I have given you a "pill" this time, I may say a "bolus." I don't know when I have written such a volume.

Always your affectionate

FATHER.

Jany. 11th, 1875 (written from Kensington).

MY DEAR KATIE,

It appears to me that we are at issue as regards correspondence. You have made up your

more respectful way, and not begin your letters with Old Fellow, but say something about dear, delightful, over-indulgent, best of fathers, or something in that way.

I hear of another notice of me, and will direct it to you, and the next to Siddy. Some of those papers are worth keeping. How about the violin? You can go on for another twelve lessons if you have time for practice, and inclination and pluck to stick to it; if not, it would be a pity to waste so much money.

Give my love to mamma, Emmie, and Siddy, and accept the same which leaves at this present,

Your affectionate

FATHER.

Brunswick Street, Oxford Road, Manchester,
Thursday, May 8th.

MY DEAREST KATIE,

More chops and changes. My benefit, after all, is settled for the Friday, instead of the Tuesday following—that is, to-morrow fortnight. They would like you to play on the Saturday night, keeping the bill intact. We have had very good business so far, but this is the oddest week in the year. The shops are shut, and people holiday-making—outdoor amuse-

ments the order of the day; but though we have not had wet nights, the weather has been chilly and showery during the day.

I send you two of the leading papers, but poor stuff in the way of criticism. I have seen nobody but S——, who, you may suppose, did the extreme of hospitality, and gave me a glass of claret such as I never tasted before, and set me on my legs after a cruel long rehearsal. I have had no letters yet from Amelia Jane, disinterested Green, or sentimental Sid. All better employed, I suppose. I can put you up here very comfortably next week; I shall be seeing some of the people, and will make known to them the interesting fact. The audiences are as jolly and juicy as ever, and will be delighted to see you. With best love to mamma, Charley, and the aforesaid naughty ones,

Your affectionate and awful

DAD.

22, Canning Street, Liverpool,
Friday.

MY DEAR MARQUIS,*

As you did not distress yourself by writing all at once and in a desperate hurry, I have taken my time in answering your letter.

* Another nickname of his son Walter.

So you have taken to rackets, have you? What will be your next little game? It is good sport, I must admit. I am getting through this engagement much easier than Manchester. Very few rehearsals, bad business, but quite as good as I expected, for the weather is cruelly warm, and the town in a fearful state of commercial depression. I am fortunate here in having the plummiest lodgings we get anywhere in our travels.

Master Ned, as I told Sid, is all right, getting on famously; we dine together occasionally, but he has been rehearsing my pieces a good deal. I don't care about rehearsals, so I don't give them more than two to a piece. Give my love to mamma and auntie. Tell Sid I got his letter, and was very much pleased with it; in point of handwriting it is the best he has written. Are you helping him with the garden? It is to be in apple-pie order, or some folks I know will get a jacketing. Shan't I be glad to get home again; p'r'aps not, but I think I shall.

Your affectionate,

AWFUL DAD.

22, Canning Street,
July 4th, 1876.

MY DEAR SID,

I am sorry I could not answer your two letters

before this. I have had one of the hardest month's work that has fallen to my lot for some time. Your last letter was really well written, and if you will write a little larger yours will be a very good hand. The great event came off last night—the meeting of two Comptons on one stage; and though the house was very bad, owing to the wretched state of the town and the fine weather, the piece was highly successful. Ned has wonderfully improved, has a good light-comedy voice and person, excellent delivery, and, if I am not mistaken, is destined to make a first-rate light comedian. I need hardly tell you he did not look quite so handsome as "the elder Compton," but his appearance was highly in his favour. We will send you some papers when we get them; indeed, Ned is going to dine with me to-day, and may bring some with him.

I am luxuriating in my nice lodgings—such a treat after Manchester. Give my love to the Marquis of Lombardy, and tell him his turn comes next. I suppose you are getting the garden nicely weeded for me, as you always do. No more at present from the

BEST OF FATHERS.

Eddie is not here yet, or he would send his love.

22, Canning Street, L'pool,
July 12th, 1876.

DEAREST CATHARINE JULIA,

I am not altogether surprised to hear you are not getting the business you ought; but blessed are they that expect nothing, and they will not be disappointed. You knew you had an unworthy rival. However, you will just keep your hand in, and get a nice sea-side trip. Ned and I have two or three little irons a little way into two or three little fires, but whether they will arrive at white heat or not we must wait to see. Give my superfine love to Emilia. I hope the change in the weather to-day will exhilarate you both. I send a paper speaking very well of Eddy, and shall forward a rum biography of *me* in a Manchester paper.

I shall not expect to hear from you before I leave here, unless something of importance turns up.

Good-bye, naughty girls.

Your affectionate

DAD.

Theatre Royal, Haymarket,
23 Sept. 1861.

MY DEAR COMPTON,

I particularly require your opinion on the following case, which is another proof, if any were

wanting, that "truth is stranger than fiction." To arrive at a right conclusion has somewhat perplexed me, yet I think that your clear head will enable you to unravel the mystery. The facts are these :

Some time ago—it is supposed about that period when Music, heavenly maid, was young—there resided in the eastern counties, close to the railway terminus of an important town, a lady of great personal attractions, possessed of a large amount of pork pies, which excited the envy of the neighbouring gentry, more particularly the late Baron Rothschild, until Alderman Solomons took the matter up, and, by a chemical analysis, discovered they were composed of veal. A large grazier, not one hundred miles from the residence of the lady, was in the habit of fatting calves for Chelmsford Market, which was considered presumptive evidence by the vast concourse of people that crowded the court-house of that gay town. The lady received a sentence of acquittal without a stain on her character ; but in driving to her residence in a one-horse chaise, her feet became entangled in the stirrups, when she suddenly found herself in the arms of a stranger, but, the night being dark, it was impossible to distinguish his features ; while the horse, being somewhat fresh, started off at a fearful pace, leaving

her in the arms of her deliverer, to whom she was shortly afterwards united. But the Lord Chancellor having decided that the children of this marriage should be educated in the Moslem faith, it having been proved that the Emperor of Russia had his eye upon Constantinople, the anxious mother proceeded to the dominions of the Sultan; but as he was not at home when she called, orders were left that she should be precipitated into the Bosphorus, no sack being employed in the ruthless deed, which naturally was a great blow to the surrounding country families. Accordingly a statue was erected to her memory near the Court-house at Chelmsford, on the right as you enter the town from the station, and is exhibited in a sitting posture. The husband now claims her entire property, and the question arises as to which are the legitimate heirs—the uncles, the brothers, the husband, or the bereaved family.

Your early reply and opinion on this extraordinary case will relieve the suspense of the whole neighbourhood.

And believe me,

Faithfully yours,

(Sd.) JNO. B. BUCKSTONE.

10, Lancaster Place, Strand, W.C.
September 21st, 1877.

MY DEAR MR. COMPTON,

I am sorry I cannot aid you in your work, as I had but few opportunities of seeing your father except on the stage. Except when I played Jaques at the Haymarket for a few nights, with the Vezin-Chippendale Company, I was never engaged with him in the same theatre. Of course I shared in the general respect which was felt for him by all who knew him, and had an unbounded admiration for his great abilities as an actor.

The only special anecdote I know of him is, I daresay, familiar to you. Once, when some ill-bred persons were talking loudly in a private box while your father was on the stage, he coolly advanced to them and said, "I am afraid our acting interferes with your conversation"—a rebuke which had the desired effect.*

* The anecdote here referred to runs at length as follows: "The Heir-at-Law" and "His First Champagne" were being played at the Haymarket Theatre, my father, of course, appearing as Doctor Pangloss and Dickey Watt. During the comedy, the performers were constantly annoyed by the loud talking of two ladies and two gentlemen seated in the Queen's box, by favour of the Lord Chamberlain, who had given them the necessary pass. I may as well mention that both its male occupants were officers in Her Majesty's Service, and that the two ladies, oddly enough,

No doubt you will get abundant materials from those who knew him more intimately than I had the advantage of doing.

With all sympathy, believe me, yours truly,

HERMANN VEZIN.

10, St. Leonard's Terrace, Chelsea,
26th Sept. 1877.

DEAR SIR,

I am most happy to add my mite to the heap of grateful recollections of the talent and integrity of your worthy father which I am sure you will receive from all who had the pleasure of his acquaintance. I only regret that my enjoyment of his professional

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bore the same family name as my father. The comedy over, the farce commenced, and now these "ill-bred persons" (as Mr. Vezin very properly terms them) completely turned their backs on the occupants of the stage, and talked away louder than ever. This got to be so bad that the actor (Mr. Walter Gordon), who, as Captain Smith, was playing a very difficult scene with my father, became quite distressed. Seeing his uneasiness, my father very coolly observed to him, "Wait a minute, Gordon; I am afraid our acting interferes with the conversation of those ladies and gentlemen." Then, advancing to the box in his ragged dress, amidst the applause of the indignant audience, he continued, as nearly as I can remember, thus: "Ladies and Gentlemen, the respectable portion of the house have paid their money to see us act, and if you don't consider it worth your while to give us your attention, please do not prevent them from doing so." Another storm of applause, accompanied by cries of "Bravo, Compton!"

assistance was restricted to two of my dramas—"The Follies of a Night" and "The Knights of the Round Table." In the former, as Mr. Druggendraft, and in the latter, as Mr. Smith, he raised very subordinate characters to an importance scarcely to be expected. But it was in the marvellous creations of Shakespeare, and the works of our grand old English dramatists, that your father gained his imperishable reputation. His Touchstone, his Dogberry, his Gravedigger, will never be forgotten by those who were fortunate enough to witness them. In him we have lost not only an admirable actor, but a man who was in every way an honour to his profession, free from petty

and the piece proceeded, the party in the box making a "mute and inglorious" exit. The sequel to the foregoing may be described in a few words. The two young gentlemen sent round to the manager, Mr. Buckstone, for an apology, since one of his actors had insulted them. Mr. Buckstone, whose well-known deafness had prevented him from feeling the annoyance to the extent that the others had, after inquiring into the circumstances of the case, at once sent back a reply to the effect that the "boot was on the other leg," and that he demanded an apology, since they had insulted one of his actors. The apology, I believe, was ultimately tendered, or at least the matter was "forgotten" by the offenders, whom my father, strange to say, met, at their mess dinner at Knightsbridge Barracks, some months afterwards. He was formally introduced to them by their colonel, but they did not mention that they had met before!

EDWARD COMPTON.

jealousies, and loyally doing his best with any part confided to him, however unworthy it might be of his abilities. May those to whom his loss is irreparable derive some consolation from their knowledge of the universal respect and regard with which his memory will be always associated.

Believe me, dear Sir,

Very sincerely yours,

(Sd.) J. R. PLANCHÉ.

Edward Compton, Esq.

Queen's Hotel, Manchester,
Nov. 13, 1877.

MY DEAR EDWARD COMPTON,

It would give me the greatest pleasure to contribute to your good work, but I literally have nothing to remember in the way of anecdote respecting your dear father. Though associated with him professionally for so many years, at the Princess's, Drury Lane, and the Haymarket, I don't think I ever exchanged a dozen words with him out of the theatre. Indeed, I may almost say I had not the pleasure of his acquaintance. I never met him in society or at a club. He appeared at rehearsal and disappeared after it; reappeared at night, played, and vanished with clock-like regularity. He was not a man of wild adventure,

had no perilous escapes, never attempted Mont Blanc, nor, I believe, even Snowdon; though I have an impression that I once heard of him on the summit of Primrose Hill. The only escapade of his on record is his celebrated visit to Epsom races. I have no doubt you have yourself alluded to this remarkable passage in his otherwise uneventful life, or may have had it more circumstantially related by others. In either case you have only to strike your pen through my account of it and give the better version:

A comedy of Bayle Bernard's (I forget its name) was running at the Haymarket, in which your father played the part of an old postboy—Joe Withers. It was an unimportant character in itself, but was so admirably acted by him that it became the feature of the piece. In pleasant company at Epsom the hour of departure for town was unheeded, and on reaching the station he found, to his horror, that the last train had started, and it was impossible for him to reach the theatre in time for the night's performance. Next morning, with sheepish air, he met his brother-actors. "I am so sorry," said he; "I'm afraid I put you to great inconvenience last night. I suppose you had to change the piece? What did you play?" "Oh no," was the reply; "we got through with it all right."

"Then who read my part?" "No one; we cut it out." "Cut it out!" said he. "Yes; the audience never missed it." "Cut it out! Never missed it!" he exclaimed, much mortified; and turning on his heel, grunted out, with a grim air of disgust: "Not missed indeed! ah, damned humiliating!" and walked off.

Of his style as an actor it would be superfluous to speak. He has been too recently before the public to need any description of his peculiarities from me. But I may say that I was one of his most ardent admirers, and have reaped immense advantage from having him so frequently associated with me on the stage, enhancing every scene and adding double significance to every point of mine, as well as his own, by his admirable by-play and artistic co-operation; his quaint, odd, original manner giving unexpected value to words apparently incapable of any whimsical interpretation. His style was peculiarly his own, and unlike that of any other actor. He had a queer dry humour that never failed of effect, and was especially adapted to Shakespeare's clowns, of which he was so remarkable a representative. Touchstone, the Gravedigger, Launcelot Gobbo, etc. etc. seemed to have been written expressly for the exhibition of his peculiar humour. Besides these, a host of modern

creations kept him the constant favourite of the public, ever welcomed with expectant delight and greeted with genial laughter. Behind the scenes and in the green-room I always found him pleasant and agreeable; he was emphatically *bon camarado.*

One amusing little foible he had. During the rehearsals of a new piece he never would allow that he had a good part in it, and it was not till after the incessant laughter of the audience convinced him of the fact that he could be brought to believe it. "Not a telling line in it," was his constant phrase. Nay, some of his most successful embodiments were to the last distasteful to him. The part of Dr. Druggendraft, in "The Follies of a Night"—one of his most perfect assumptions—he positively detested; and when engaged at the Haymarket actually made a stipulation that he was not to be asked to play the character. He afterwards, however, yielded, and made his usual hit in it.

Like Mrs. Humby, he had the art, as I have said, of giving value to phrases of themselves valueless, by his incisive mode of utterance, his affected stolidity, and his accompanied original facial expression; arresting the attention upon nothings without apparently wishing to invest them with any undue importance;

a "How d'ye do?" from her lips, or a "Wish you good morning" from his, frequently exciting more merriment in the audience than many a laboured jest concocted with the deliberate intention of convulsing the hearers.

Mrs. Humby, a young and pretty woman, was inimitable in such parts as the Bride in "The Happiest Nay of my Life;" Cowslip and similar characters giving the *double entendres*, with which the drama of her day was so plentifully sprinkled, with a seeming simplicity and unconsciousness that entirely robbed them of their coarseness. In all she did there was a freshness and originality that charmed you, you could scarcely say why. So Compton had a sort of weird fascination that took possession of you as soon as he appeared, and riveted your attention from that moment till the end of the piece.

Many must still remember Mrs. Humby's delicious representation of Lady Clutterbuck in "Used Up." Every word she spoke was a gem. Her mode of receiving Sir Charles's startling remarks not only rendered her own character amusing but gave double value to every line of his. Compton in the same way always *completed* the dialogue.

One of the great arts of an actor, and one too

much neglected, is the art of *receiving* the words of others. The "*I*'ve done, now *you*" style may be tolerable in tragedy, but is death to comedy. "Effects" and "points" to be really telling must be mutual. The "scene," the "situation" should get the applause, not the disunited effort of each actor. To speak a good line well is, or ought to be, easy enough; but to *receive* one well requires more than mere correct delivery—it requires rare intelligence, and without it the author's meaning is only half conveyed. At the same time nothing exacts more discretion as to its use —for while appropriate and significant by-play enhances, unmeaning exaggerated grimace destroys. No one understood this better than Compton, with whom it was a pleasure to act. I have never known him try to lessen the effect of a brother-actor by using an unworthy "gag" to get the laugh to himself; on the contrary, he invariably considered and added to the general success.

And so with Mrs. Humby, her intelligent by-play and the crisp smack of her delivery frequently gave a fillip to the scene when the author himself had furnished nothing particularly witty or humorous. I don't know one handsome dashing young lady now on the stage (both of which Lady Clutterbuck ought to

be) who can manage to extort a smile out of this character. It is simply regarded as a "feeder" to Sir Charles Coldstream, and is indeed frequently and most absurdly given to the "old woman" of the company, thereby entirely reversing and ruining the idea of the piece.

Compton possessed to a remarkable degree the "receiving" talent, and more than one actor must have been surprised at the unusual effect produced by his own speeches when having them for the first time properly *received*, as they were sure to be by this admirable comedian—for comedian he was; no mere *low* comedian; no careless droll, but a consummate conscientious artist. Long will it be before we see his like again.

I am afraid I am twaddling, so will come to an end. I have thrown a very small stone into your pitcher, but I told you I had nothing to say—and I've said it.

Wishing you every success, believe me,

Faithfully yours,

C. J. MATHEWS.

15A, Grafton Street, Bond Street, W.
3rd June, 1878.

DEAR SIR,

It is a great pleasure to me to bear my testimony, such as it is, to the admirable qualities of your dead father.

I say nothing of him as an actor, for I should deem it presumptuous on my part to pass judgment on a man who was elected by the public voice to a high position in his profession long before my individual opinion was of consequence to anybody.

I speak of him as I knew him during that long period when "Hamlet" was played at the Lyceum with a success to which his inimitable acting as the First Gravedigger contributed so much.

My association with him has left many pleasant memories of his unfailing geniality, and of that rich humour the loss of which is perhaps more keenly felt by those who were fortunate enough to know him, than by the public with whom he was so great a favourite.

I shall never forget the speech which he made on the first hundredth night of "Hamlet," when, after the performance, the event was celebrated by a supper given by my dear friend, Mr. Bateman, at which a number of our friends and associates were present.

Mr. Compton, as you may remember, was then playing nightly the character of Sam Savory, in the farce of "The Fish out of Water." This farce had preceded "Hamlet" one hundred nights, and he took

occasion to impress this fact upon us in the following way.

We were all in high spirits. Mr. Bateman's health, Mr. Compton's, and my own were drank amidst enthusiasm and jocularity.

Your father, with his peculiar gravity, ended the reply to the toast with which he was associated somewhat after this fashion:

"Thank you, gentlemen, for your appreciation of my efforts in that immortal drama, 'The Fish out of Water.' I take this opportunity of thanking my friend Irving for the really indefatigable support which he has given me in that agreeable little trifle of 'Hamlet,' with which, as you know, we are in the habit of winding up the evening."

The burst of laughter which greeted this I shall ever remember.

To you, my dear Mr. Compton, as your father's son, I can wish no better fortune than that of sustaining his reputation in the profession which you have adopted, and of which he was so honoured a member.

Yours sincerely,

(Sd.) HY. IRVING.

YOU ask me, my dear Compton, to recall to you, if

possible, any recollections of my late valued friend, your father, which may serve your purpose in the memoir which I understand you are preparing. I am afraid I can give you little help which would be found serviceable for your purpose; one thing, however, I *can* do, and that shall be done with the utmost readiness and sincerity—I can bear my testimony, whatever you may consider it worth, to the many admirable qualities which distinguished your late father as a man, fully as much as did the more publicly recognised abilities of the actor. On these latter the public have already so constantly and distinctly expressed their opinion that it would sound almost like impertinence to add any praises of my own; it is, however, a pleasurable recollection of my early life, before I became a professional actor, to remember my constant visits to the Strand and Olympic Theatres, the former then under the management of Mr. William Farren, and the latter, I think, of Mr. Walter Watts; when your father was a member of each company (which contained also the names of Mrs. Stirling and Leigh Murray), and where I witnessed with great delight many of his most excellent impersonations of character. I remember well his Peter Paternoster in "John Dobbs," Toby Twinkle in "All that Glitters is not

Gold," and Richard Watt, in a capital farce which poor Leigh played splendidly in—"His First Champagne." It was in after years that I used to admire (I fancy perhaps I got at this time a taste for the legitimate) his great Shakespearean performances, Touchstone and Dogberry—though, if I remember rightly, he had already played the latter part at the Olympic. I remember, too, taking my stand at the doors of Drury Lane Theatre very early on an afternoon in July, 1848, when Macready had a farewell benefit previously to his final visit to America; the Queen herself was to be in the Theatre. In the second piece on that occasion, "The Jealous Wife," your father played Sir Harry Beagle for Macready, who himself acted Mr. Oakley. The mention of this circumstance recalls to me that, long years afterwards, I chanced to be playing a star engagement at Cheltenham, and remembering that Macready was living there (it was not very long before the death of that great actor), I called at his house with my son, and had the pleasure of some talk with the veteran. Among other theatrical names, that of your father was particularly mentioned, and Macready recalled with much satisfaction his association with him, in the memorable management of the former at Drury Lane;

he spoke in the highest terms of admiration of your father's talent as an artist and of the respect he entertained for Mr. Compton—that most excellent actor and estimable gentleman.

I remember, on one occasion, at Willis's Rooms, when the dinner was given to my young friend Charles Mathews, previously to his Australian trip, your father amused a friend and myself by the account he gave us of a little difference of opinion which had arisen between Macready and himself, touching the casting of the two parts of Touchstone and William in the revival of "As You Like It" at Drury Lane. Mr. Keeley had been allotted the part of Touchstone, and that of William fell to Mr. Compton. The question of procedure in the theatre would probably account for this allotment of the respective parts; but your father told us he wasn't satisfied: "So I went to Mr. Macready's room, and, after a little introductory matter, I said to him, 'But, Mr. Macready, Touchstone is my part, and I don't seem at all to fancy William.' He coaxed me into it, however, and ultimately had his way." With what accuracy your father gauged his own powers the public thereafter abundantly testified by their approval of his performance of the character. He told us, too, of the satisfaction he felt

at having acted, as a young man, with Edmund Kean; and I remember the description he gave us of the latter's tremendous energy, and of the "magnificent eye" which he turned upon him when your father acted the part of Fitzharding to his Sir Edward Mortimer, in "The Iron Chest." I have mentioned the dinner to young Charley Mathews, but had almost forgotten that, on the occasion of the benefit performance at Covent Garden, your father and I played together in "The Critic"—he as Don Ferolo Whiskerandos and I as the Beefeater—and I remember now his look of surprise when, at our meeting on the stage for the fight, I ventured to try to his face an imitation of his inimitable style and manner. The audience took the joke and roared heartily, and I don't think your father enjoyed the fun the less for the little trick I played on him. At our mutual friend Walter Lacy's benefit we met again, on the Drury Lane stage, as Mark Meddle and Dolly Spanker, and I recall very pleasantly your father's admirable performance of the former part. It has not been my good fortune to meet him so much as I could have wished in private society, though we have occasionally met at the tables of mutual friends, and always, I hope, with mutual satisfaction; for I ever found in

him the kindly genial gentleman who had gained for himself the admiration alike of the public as an artist, and with it the affectionate regard of those who were privileged to know him more intimately in his private life.

I wish you every success in the work you have proposed to yourself, and that it may be in every respect worthy of the name it is to bear.

Yours sincerely,

J. L. TOOLE.

DEAR SIR,

You have asked me, my dear Mr. Compton, to accomplish a rather difficult, on account of its being with me a most unusual, task. "Accustomed as I am to public speaking," I am altogether unaccustomed to public writing, or rather to writing for the public. Independently of this, too, most of my recollections of your dear father, treasured and cherished though they be, are not of such general interest that they would be found worthy to hold a place in the volume you are preparing. The following few incidents, however, the public and yourself may be pleased to welcome, and I therefore gladly jot them down as being at least characteristic of the great actor and true gentleman so much respected, admired, and, indeed, beloved by my husband and myself.

One of his first appearances on the stage was made at Spalding in Lincolnshire, in my father's (Mr. William Robertson's) circuit company, his "reward of merit" being at the rate of one pound, paid weekly. Though a mere beginner, I have always understood that, even at this time, he gave abundant promise of future success; while his genial manner and capital spirits were then, as always, proverbial. Among the many hardships endured by provincial actors of that period, was the oft-repeated order to "march" some thirty miles or so, for the purpose of appearing at night in some adjacent town. On one of these occasions, your father, Mr. Chippendale, and my father were companions; but one of the three, either from accident or a low state of the funds, was only able to face the journey with one shoe. Under these circumstances, and knowing that the journey must be made, there was only one thing to be done, and, to the credit of the profession be it said, they did it. They stuck by each other—as they always do, always have done, and, I hope, always will do—and *took it in turns to walk with a single shoe,* until their destination was reached!

Many and strange are the tales told of "stage waits," but surely the one so long remembered as a

standing joke against your father is worthy of a place among the most peculiar. I refer to that occasion when your father, Mr. Buckstone, and my husband were dining out at Manchester. The piece that evening being "The Hypocrite," and your father's presence being unnecessary until the third act, he walked calmly to his rooms, so that he might enjoy his quiet cup of coffee as usual before proceeding to business. In the meantime the comedy mentioned sped merrily along, and the announcement in the third act, "Mr. Mawworm is below!" found the audience in the very best of humours, as they waited in eager expectation for the appearance of their favourite. The cue, however, was not taken up, and, after the usual hurrying of footsteps, and whispering of voices, the mortifying news that "Mr. Compton was not in the theatre" was made apparent to those assembled by the ringing down of the curtain. A messenger was at once despatched to the absentee's apartments, where he was found, having finished his usual cup of coffee, comfortably taking the regulation "forty winks," in his slippers! The first person he encountered on his arrival at the theatre was my husband, to whom he remarked, in his quaint, dry manner, "Well, Young Kendal, *you've* done a nice

thing!" He then hurried on his costume, and, the curtain being taken up again, he was greeted on his appearance with a reception that can only be described as "tremendous."

Your father's regular habits were pretty well known in the profession, so I was not surprised, when Mr. Kendal and myself were "starring" at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, Liverpool, to hear of his methodical way of living from my landlady, Mrs. Thorne, who was making him comfortable in her other set of rooms, he being at that time with the "Vezin-Chippendale Company" at the Amphitheatre. I determined, however, that we should see as much of each other as possible, since Fate had thrown us so conveniently together, and every night on coming home I would go to his sitting-room and insist on his digesting his frugal supper over a pipe with Mr. Kendal. At the end of the fortnight, when parting from us, he said to me, "Good-bye, my dear girl. I like you very much; but you have entirely spoilt my constitution, to say nothing of my complexion!" As your father was turned seventy at the time, this remark was particularly humorous.

MADGE ROBERTSON (KENDAL).

The Late Mr. Compton.

I first recollect meeting Mr. Compton at the Royal, Liverpool, under Mr. Webster's management, and, with his usual kindness of disposition, on finding that I was away from home for the first time, he at once introduced me to his circle of friends in that town, and, in their company and his, I spent most of my spare time in the pleasantest manner. Many actors have been grateful to him for a kind word of welcome when entering a strange company; and his desire to make those around him happy (especially young people), and to set them at their ease, was by no means confined to my own case. During his long sojourn at the Haymarket but few things occurred (save what have been told already) that would be of sufficient interest to relate here; a few short anecdotes, however, I think I may venture on, though I do not put them forward as models of wit and humour, but rather as sayings and doings thoroughly characteristic of him whose loss we so lately mourned.

He always liked to be considered a capital judge of wine, and indeed was so, except as regarded champagne, which he did not at all fancy. While playing one night at Manchester, in "His First Champagne," one of the Haymarket "wags" told him that a friend

of his (Compton's) had sent a bottle of champagne, to be drank in the piece. This he at once partook of in the after-dinner scene, and expressed himself thoroughly satisfied with. It was really a bottle of champagne *cider*, for which the "property" man had paid sixpence! However, as he remarked on finding the trick out, "There's not much difference, after all!"

On one of our summer trips, the first place we were to open at was Birmingham, and on the train arriving at Rugby, it was shunted, to allow another to start for Stafford. Compton, who had, very reluctantly, been persuaded to have a "nip" in the refreshment-room, saw the latter train starting, and, ever anxious, jumped into it at once, thinking it was the one he had just left there. He was taken on to Nuneaton, in which place he had to cool his heels for ten hours. This he spoke of as being "rather monotonous."

A brother-actor, who had not exactly "taken the house by storm" at his first appearance in London, very stupidly asked Compton: "Was my acting good?" "Well," was the reply, delivered in his inimitable style; "hum! ha! *Good* is not the word!"

One of his frequent expressions was the following,

in answer to a brother-actor, who said to him, on the occasion of his benefit: "Well, Compton, are you likely to have a good house?" Peeping through the hole in the curtain, and regarding the packed house, Compton replied: "I think so; it looks healthy!"

He had a wholesome horror of amateur actors, and on one occasion, when an egotistical young gentleman button-holed him, to descant on acting, he administered an unmistakable reproof to the presumptuous one. "I am anxious to become a professional now," said the young man, "for I always get splendid notices, and all my friends think I should make a great hit." "What line?" inquired Compton. "Well," smiled the youth, "I play all the funny parts, but I don't succeed in making my audience laugh heartily. I want to make them scream as you do—to make the house ring again with laughter, in fact." "Ah," dryly responded Compton, "change your line of character a bit; *try Hamlet, and let me know how you succeed!*"

The following letters, from Buckstone and Sothern respectively, will doubtless be read with interest:

Theatre Royal, Haymarket,
8th April, 1864.

My dear Compton,

A few of the members of the "Court of Uncommon Pleas," with their Lord Chief Baron, intend to have a whitebait feast at

Greenwich early in the present season—of course anticipating the ministerial dinner by several weeks, as, by the time Lord Palmerston takes his whitebait, they have become sprats or pricklebacks (I don't know which), and then their tails and fins are not pleasant to masticate, because you should be able to swallow the whitebait heads and tails and all at once. Name your own day, some time early in next month, and we will muster in good force. The "Quaker" is sure to be there, also "Maldon Billy," and "Churchwarden Cully," with the elegant Walter and Chip—not forgetting our Haymarket Encyclopædia, who will bring the Parish Clark, and the illustrious descendant of the kings of Ireland. The great-grandsons of Jonathan Wilde and Dick Turpin are likely to put in an appearance, with many others too numerous to mention.* See me about the matter some evening next week.

Hereof fail not!

Given under our seal,

JNO. B. BUCKSTONE,

Chief Baron of the Court.

The "Court" alluded to in the foregoing letter was an institution at the Haymarket, whereby Buckstone, as Lord Chief Baron, tried such offenders as those actors who kept the stage waiting, required the prompter's assistance, failed to come to rehearsal, etc. They were always found "Guilty," and always fined a bottle of whisky, from which there was no appeal. Compton, no friend to the "spirits," was accustomed

* Playful allusions to Messrs. Howe, Rogers, Cullenford, Walter Gordon, Chippendale, Braid, Clark, O'Connor (scenic artist), Wilde (acting manager), and Turpin (box book-keeper).

(as frequently as he could) very slyly to tell his dresser to bring up his glass to his room, and he would drink it there. This he never did, but would always make a present of the "hot and rebellious liquor" to his dresser.

The other letter (from Sothern) runs thus:

T. R., Glasgow,
October 11th, 1864.

DEAR COMPTON,

Well, you have bothered me! I'm the worst hand in the world at doing anything "to order." The mere suggestion has frightened my appetite away, and dinner only just on the table. Unkind! So you like the "Cedars?" Good. As we live so near each other, we can often do a weed together, and coax ourselves into the belief that we're two uncommonly sociable fellows. God bless you!

Ever yours,
E. A. SOTHERN.

I conclude this brief article by thoroughly endorsing all that has been said of the great comedian, both as an actor and as a man.

HENRY H. HOWE.

Theatre Royal, Haymarket,
Oct. 31st, 1877.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE LATE MR. COMPTON.

IT is now some twenty-four years since I first had the pleasure of being introduced to this excellent comedian.

He was then living at Charing Cross, and I was invited one Sunday to dine with him. At that time he was in the prime of life, and had already established his reputation as an original and conscientious actor of more than ordinary talent. He was tall, being two inches above the ordinary height; a profusion of dark curly hair overshadowed in places his forehead, which was high and massive. His bright eye was merriment itself, and gave one the idea of the most intense capacity for fun, and the strongest sense of drollery and humour. The nose was somewhat large, though well formed, and with a decided character of its own. The mouth was also highly expressive of humour, and in the course of conversation frequently relaxed into the sweetest and most pleasant smile I have ever seen in a man. Throughout dinner, over which he presided with more than ordinary hospitality, we were regaled with many a racy anecdote; and many a dry, not to say sly piece of humour enlivened our conversation. At one stage of the dinner Mr. C. got up and gave us an imitation of an Irish peasant's demeanour at a rustic funeral, which was of course inimitable; and a five years' sojourn in that much-debated soil, many years after, enabled me to verify the accuracy of this true comedian's touch of Irish character.

There was a certain severity, not to say dogmatism in his diction, and in his observations of men and manners, which I was hardly prepared for; but his natural kindness of disposition and real amiability of character impressed me, even in that first interview, especially in his behaviour to his wife, children, and guests.

The next evening I had the pleasure of seeing him for the first time on the stage of the Haymarket Theatre as the First Gravedigger, to Mr. Vandenhoff's Hamlet. The Hamlet of Mr. Vandenhoff, I may say without any disparagement of that actor, has, after the lapse of so many years, completely faded from my remembrance. Not so Mr. Compton's Gravedigger. I can distinctly remember the peculiar angularity of his walk, and apparent stiffness and awkwardness of his gait. I was very much struck by the care and finish of his acting, and also by the undoubted marks which it betrayed of a thorough knowledge and appreciation of all the points of Shakespeare's text, and an evident desire above all things not to "o'erstep the modesty of nature," a characteristic which marked his representations so completely in after years. There were no artificial transparent tricks, no vulgar attempts at making fun where the text would not

admit of it, or the sense of the subject allow it. In short there was an utter absence of what in theatrical parlance is termed "gag," alas! too much in vogue now, as it always was when Shakespeare reprehended it as "villainous; and showing a most pitiful ambition in the fool that used it." There was a marked peculiarity in Mr. Compton's voice, particularly in his intonation and in the depth of tone, which was especially apparent at the end of a sentence, and which led many people to imagine that his voice was assumed for stage purposes. This was not the fact, his voice in familiar conversation being the same, though perhaps not so full as on the stage. Mr. Compton, of all comedians, was especially admirable in his power of facial expression—no comedian that I have seen excelled him in this characteristic.

He could equally portray the bothered look of Sam Savery when he is instructed as to the "heads of a despatch," the stupid look of Dogberry when charging the watch—the sententious look of the Gravedigger when propounding the law to his subordinate, or the various expressions of countenance with which he illustrated fear, ignorance, presumption, or impudence.

He was very severe, and not without reason, with young men who had such an overweening belief in their

own histrionic powers as to fancy they had only got to spout a few lines well, and any manager would at once employ them. He repeatedly instanced to the writer cases of young men who left home to embrace the theatrical profession, assuring themselves of complete success, and after a week or two's trial returning, as he expressed it, "without a rag on their backs." He also often combated the notion, so prevalent, that the profession of an actor does not demand the bestowal of time, patience, and assiduity in the same measure as other callings in life; and the absurd idea that, given a liking for the stage, the rest at once follows. No doubt in his own case it was only by perpetual and close study of his parts, together with keen and careful observation of men and character, that he was enabled eventually to take rank as one of the first comedians of this generation.

Speaking of Dickens, he said that his powers of observation were wonderful. He (Mr. Compton) had many opportunities of witnessing his marvellous facility in this respect, and also of his wit in describing his impressions. On one occasion some of them were with Dickens, watching a man in the simple operation of grooming a horse, and making the peculiar hissing noise so necessary, it would appear, to the completion

of this operation. No one could find a word expressive of this noise till Dickens at once described it as "effervescing."

Being asked as to the health of an acquaintance who was growing old, and also whether she retained the use of her faculties; his answer was, "Yes, I think so, that is of as many as she ever possessed!"

Talking of some poor relations who had been recipients of his bounty for years, he said, "Yes, sir, the whole tribe of them leaned on me for years;" and then added, in his own peculiar manner, "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation."

Meeting him one evening near the Haymarket Theatre at about the time he was due in his dressing-room, he suddenly said, "Well, good-bye; I must to my holy work!"

Speaking some years back at his benefit at Manchester, in an impromptu speech delivered before the curtain, he is reported to have said, amongst other things, "I came to you many years ago, a stranger, and you took me in—I hope I haven't returned the compliment and taken you in!"

Being on a visit at the house of a Dissenting minister of some eminence, the former asked him if he would go and hear him preach (which, by-the-way, he

did), not however without retorting, "You never come to hear me, and I don't see how you can expect me to go and hear you."

During the few opportunities I had of seeing him during his last sad and most painful illness I could not help admiring the Christian resignation with which he bore his terrible fate. With a manliness which few can realise, he said, "What can a man do but 'grin and bear it?' I had," he said, "reckoned on ten years more of life, but this blow has shattered all my hopes. So true is it 'man proposes—God disposes.'"

THE first time I saw Mr. Compton was at the Princess's Theatre—I won't say how many years ago—in the character of Tony Lumpkin. I have a grateful recollection of those days, or rather nights. The theatre was under the management of Mr. Maddox. It was the fashion at the time to speak somewhat disrespectfully of "Old Maddox," who was a notoriously severe manager and a terrible screw at a bargain; but he always kept an excellent company together, and I have seldom seen the old comedies so well rendered, "all round," as they were in Oxford Street at the period I allude to. Save and except that Compton's style mellowed with age, the Compton of the Lyceum

but a year or two back was the Compton of the Princess's some—well, some good many years ago. I had not seen him at Covent Garden or the English Opera House, and when I did see him at the Princess's I was only a boy home from school; but I believe I had a precocious appreciation of the "genuine article," and Compton was the first actor whom, as a rule, I rushed off to see on the first evening of my holidays.

The Princess's company at that time—consisting of Granby, Gilbert (for many years the first "old man" in America), Fisher (also a popular actor in America), an uncle or cousin of our David Fisher; Leigh Murray, then a handsome stripling; Compton, Conway (who recently died at Brooklyn), John Cooper, James Vining, poor Cowell, and Miss Emmeline Montague, afterwards Mrs. Compton, and assuredly one of the most charmingly sympathetic, graceful, and winning actresses of her day—the company, I say, was one to remember as a body, but Compton stood out prominently in every production, remarkable alike for his originality and his honest use of genuine and legitimate effects.

The first time I met him professionally (a good many years after, I need not say), I was to an extent

disillusionised. He was not in a good temper. He always hated burlesque, and I fancied possibly his dislike embraced the unfortunate authors of that—to him—unpleasant class of play. At least he always said he hated it. I believe that in reality he rather enjoyed rolling out the comical couplets poor dear inimitable Frank Talfourd so often liberally provided him with. The stolid manner in which he would deal forth the most excruciatingly wicked puns, and then stare half reprovingly, half surprisedly at the audience was unique. No actor ever made so much of an author's dialogue, with apparently so little effort; but the chief secret of this was that he was a most admirable reader. However puerile might be the words of a part, with Compton there was no "getting it over," no "gabbling." His delivery was indeed a study for the young actor. In order to test the marvellous power he had of rendering a merely verbal quibble with effect, I deliberately assigned to him some lines I had previously given to another well-known actor, who had spoken them without provoking a smile, in the perfect assurance that with Compton's delivery they would produce the desired result. They did, the house roared, and Compton looked astonished and half-indignant as usual.

On the morning of my first introduction to him I ventured to express an opinion that the old melodrama of "The Miller and his Men" was rather rubbish.

"Not such rubbish as burlesque," blurted out Compton.

"My dear sir," I rejoined, "'The Miller and his Men' *is* burlesque."

"Hah!" he replied, closing his mouth with a peculiar bite that seemed to dispose of the argument.

As the rehearsal proceeded I began to dread that the dissatisfied comedian would wilfully do nothing with an uncongenial part, but I was altogether mistaken. The gruffness was all on the surface, and when I learnt to know the actor better—which I did in a marvellously short time—I found that it "was his way," and never afterwards "grizzled" when I saw him frown ominously at his part. A more outspoken man never lived, and a story is told of his being present at the reading of a new play at the Olympic, which was received in solemn silence by the company, but which Compton summed up with the following concise and not over-flattering criticism:

"Hah," he observed solemnly, buttoning his coat

and taking up his hat, "hah, whoever wrote that play ought to do another, and then die. Good-morning."

The next time I met him at the Haymarket was on the occasion of the first rehearsal of an extravaganza, in which he was to play another of those detested burlesque monarchs. I had made up my mind for a repetition of the dissatisfaction expressed on a previous occasion. Something or other, however, seemed to hit Compton in the part, and at the conclusion of his principal scene he actually suggested that he should dance "the sailor's hornpipe." This he actually did, every night, with a gravity and an utter absence of terpsichorean skill which convulsed the house.

"How does it go?" I asked him one night behind the scenes.

"Very well," he replied; "they laugh a good deal, which is good, and they groan a good deal, which is better."

He was singularly diffident as to his own ability, and peculiarly apt to be dissatisfied with himself. On the first night of a comedy at the Globe he said to me, in the middle of the piece, in accents of extreme disappointment, "They're not laughing at anything I say. How do you account for it?"

Possibly about three out of fifty funny "lines" had missed fire, whereas the part generally was "going" amidst overwhelming laughter and applause.

Shortly after this he made a deserved hit, by his natural and even pathetic acting as the old gardener in Albery's clever play "Forgiven." I met him in the street, and asked him how he liked his part.

"Pretty well," he replied, "but it wants 'plums.'"

"Plums" was his favourite term for those unmistakably droll lines that are bound to produce a roar.

"Well, as you're a gardener in the piece, you might provide a few yourself," I replied.

Compton looked at me more in sorrow than in anger, and sighingly observing "Poor fellow!" strode solemnly on his way. He amused me immensely one day with a description of building his house at Kensington. For a long time this house was the last edifice in the road—after it came open grounds, and Compton was named by some of his *confrères* "the lonely man of the ocean," and was considerably joked about his distant and solitary habitation.

"The house was getting on capitally," he said to me, "capitally, when one day the workmen

struck. They remained on strike for six months." Then he added, sententiously, but illogically enough, "Under the circumstances of course they would." He had a remarkable knack of saying things that were not especially funny in themselves in a way that made them appear remarkably so. The utter absence of any effort to be "droll" produced an effect altogether superior to the comic remarks of the habitual joker. For instance, one day he was walking home through Kensington Gardens and he met a friend, a clergyman who lived near him, and they fell into conversation. Presently Compton said rather abruptly, "Well, I can't stop talking any longer as it's nearly three, and I dine at three."

"Dear me," replied the clergyman, "do you indeed?"

"Yes, I do," rejoined Compton severely. "Yes, I do. Do you see anything objectionable in dining at three?"

"Oh, not at all," answered the clergyman, a little taken aback at the seriousness of his companion's tone.

"Is there anything about the hour that meets with your disapproval?" again asked Compton, if possible more gravely than before.

"No, no, not at all," stammered the other, almost afraid that he had trodden on a tender corn.

"*I* consider it a remarkably *good* hour," remarked Compton almost defiantly; "don't *you?*"

"Well—a—I really——"

"Think it over, and let me know," exclaimed Compton impressively, as he grasped the clergyman's hand and wrung it violently.

A moment more, and the comedian was striding homeward through the trees, whilst the clergyman stared blankly after him with a dim notion in his mind that he had been chaffed.

I am not by any means a *laudator temporis acti*," which a rough-and-ready translator might, under the circumstances, give as "a praiser of the actors of other times," at the expense of those who are alive, but in his own line I don't expect ever to "look upon his like again," whilst a more genial, honest, upright gentleman, I know full well I shall never encounter.

H. J. Byron.

Nottingham, Sept. 29th, 1877.

My dear Mr. Compton,

My memory of the past is so weak that I cannot give you any available matter for the purpose

you require, or it would give me great pleasure to do so. I do remember, however, that his reception of me when I joined the Haymarket Theatre was of the kindest, and that he said, "*I have faith in you*"—words I have never forgotten, nor ever shall. We were much together in the better times of country theatres, and I can vouch for the high respect borne him everywhere. He was an honour to his profession —upheld it in its truth—and had a horror of all humbugs.

I should have answered you earlier, but have waited in the hope a few of the many good things I have heard him say would well up, but in my seventy-seventh year I need say no more.

Give my best regards to your excellent mother, whom I remember well in her girlhood.

With best wishes for your success, believe me,

Yours very sincerely,

W. H. CHIPPENDALE.

P.S.—Mr. Chute, of Bristol, and your father were close friends for full forty years.

68, Russell Square, W.C.

MY DEAR SIR,

My anecdote about your father, with whom I

had, after all, but a slight acquaintance, is, I fancy, characteristic.

It was a pouring wet day. Your father, walking in a hurry, and with that air of abstraction which I have always noticed as habitual to him when by himself in the street, came upon me suddenly, or I on him, just at the corner of Suffolk Street. I never saw a man apparently so taken aback. It seemed as if I was absolutely the last person in the world whom he had expected to meet. There was no sort of reason why he should have been thinking about me, and he wasn't of me, nor I of him.

"Ah, Compton!"

"Ah, Burnand, how d'ye do?"

"Fine day, isn't it?" I observed seriously.

"Very fine," he replied; "yes, very fine day." Then followed a short pause, when it evidently occurred to him for the first time that we were both standing under umbrellas. This circumstance recalled him to the fact of the case. "Hey! what?" he exclaimed, opening his eyes, as if in astonishment; "you call it a fine day?" Then he added in his very earnest manner, "Do you know, I think you *must be joking.*"

I wish I could contribute something more to your

stock, but, after ransacking my memory, I find I cannot.

I remain, yours truly,

(Sd.) F. C. BURNAND.

Ramsgate, Nov. 4th, 1877.

MY earliest recollections of Mr. Compton carry me back to a time thirty-eight or forty years ago. I was then living in a lone country house, called Warnicombe, about two miles from Tiverton, under the care of a widow lady, my guardian; and Mr. F. Mackenzie, who had lately settled in Tiverton, was the family medical adviser. On one of his professional visits, he was accompanied by his brother, whom he introduced as Mr. Charles Mackenzie; and as my guardian was confined to her bedroom, and liked a long chat with her doctor, it devolved upon me to entertain the stranger. To this end I naturally invited him to come and see the things in which I, as a boy, took most interest; such as the horses in the stable, the dogs and puppies, the pigeons, and the other accessories of a country home. Concerning all of these he had something new to tell me; and while his kindly sympathy won my heart, his quaint humour, and the fun lurking behind his gravest speech, were to me revelations of a previously unsuspected manner of

existence. A solitary child, my guardian had been herself brought up amongst Quakers; and it is not to be wondered at that I eagerly asked my new friend to accompany his brother again on the morrow. He came several times, and each time strengthened the attachment which I had conceived for him. After a while, some friend of my guardian's, who chanced to know his profession, confided the truth to her; and it reached me as a mysterious piece of knowledge, the possession of which I was on no account to betray. My previous knowledge of actors had been limited to the members of the strolling company which sometimes opened at Tiverton; and it required no penetration to discover that Mr. Charles Mackenzie belonged to a different order of beings. The stage always appeals strongly to the imagination of the young, and I began to try and picture Mr. Compton in some of the parts which I had heard he played, and to ask questions about him from those who went to London theatres. During the next few years he came once or twice in the same manner; and he never came without imparting to me something which I was glad to know. Sometimes it would be a conjuring trick, sometimes a dodge at boxing, sometimes a droll story, rendered infinitely more droll by the art of the narrator. At

length, in the summer of 1843, I became his brother's pupil, and resided in his house for the next five years. In that remote place, and at that time, there was a feeling the existence of which it is not easy now to realise, but which caused it to be thought undesirable that a professional man should be known to have a brother who was an actor. Hence, the name which had already become renowned was never mentioned, but a visit from Mr. Charles Mackenzie was none the less an annually recurring treat, and one which, as my own mind grew, I became every year better able to appreciate. He brought us glimpses of the great world from which we were so far away, told us stories of celebrities—literary, artistic, political; and discussed the topics of the day with a breadth of view and a keenness of insight of which we had no experience among our neighbours. The aforesaid neighbours were, many of them, excellent and worthy men; but when Mr. Charles Mackenzie was among them they looked the veriest bumpkins. Their clothes did not fit them, their thoughts and speech were slow, and they floundered dismally in any little verbal contest which happened to befall. I remember one of these men, a large-acred squire, who knew the calling of the visitor as a matter of confidential knowledge, and was

too much of a gentleman to disclose it, but who yet was inclined to be impertinent, and to try the effect of hinting at what he knew. The occasion was the approach of a fancy-dress ball at Tiverton, and some of us were debating about all possible and impossible costumes. The gentleman in question suddenly turned round to Mr. Charles Mackenzie, and said: "Mackenzie, do you think it would be possible to go as a rattlesnake? I have been to pantomimes, and have seen all sorts of dragons and things upon the stage. It strikes me that a rattlesnake might be managed. What do you say?" "Well," was the reply, with a grasp of the chin, a pursing up of the lips, and with a gleam of humour in the eye, and with a serious and counselling forehead, marked by those vertical wrinkles which his friends knew so thoroughly, "well, if you appeal to me, I must say that I think you will find it easier to do the noise than the fascination."

The admiration for Charles Mackenzie which was entertained by all the younger members of our little circle was greatly heightened by his muscular strength and his proficiency in all manly exercises. He was not only the wittiest and the wisest, and the best-tempered and the best-dressed man whom it ever came to us to behold; but he was also the strongest,

and the best boxer and the best horseman. There was a local strong man in Tiverton, whose boast it was that he could lift a full hogshead of cider upon his knees, and drink out of the bunghole; and this man once pestered Charles Mackenzie to try strength of arm with him at the corner of a table, the elbows resting and the hands clasped, to see which could put down the arm of the other. Mackenzie put down his antagonist instantly, and without apparent effort; overpowering him so utterly and so quickly that he gave a gentle double rap upon the table with the knuckles of his defeated antagonist. He would go for long rides with his brother without ever using his stirrups, crossing the leathers over the saddle in front of him at starting, and never taking them down. With all this power there was a total absence of display, insomuch that it was often difficult, except by an appeal to his extreme good nature, to induce him to afford us any proof of his skill.

There are few things less satisfactory than an endeavour to individualise the general recollections of so many years ago; and although I well remember that not the least of the attractions of our visitor's presence was the sparkle of his wit, I find it very difficult, at this lapse of time, to recover examples of it which will

bear repeating apart from the circumstances which called them forth. One such strikes me. We had for dinner, among other things, a ham which was not well-flavoured; and Mrs. Frederick Mackenzie, who was annoyed about it, began apologising, and saying that Ellerton, the local grocer, had sold it to her as something very excellent, and as a genuine Westphalia. "Ah!" said Mr. Compton, "I cannot determine precisely whether it is east or west, but it is a *failure* of some sort."

In May, 1848, I left Tiverton for several months, and, on my return there in the following January, I heard that Mr. Compton had married. In October, I came to London, to pursue my studies at the London Hospital, and I received a cordial invitation from Mr. Compton to visit him at Charing Cross, where he lived for several years. For the next three years, my life was so intermingled with his, that it is difficult for me to think of it apart. It would be impossible to exaggerate the advantage, to a young man fresh to London, and otherwise almost friendless there, of the close intimacy to which Mr. and Mrs. Compton at once admitted me. Although more than twenty years my senior, he retained so much of the freshness of youth that there could have been nothing about which

I should have hesitated to consult him; and he stood to me, during the three years of my studentship, almost *in loco parentis*, with a constant kindness that was only equalled by that of Mrs. Compton. No words could adequately express the extent of my indebtedness to them both.

During those three years, if my memory serves me rightly, Mr. Compton was at the Strand Theatre, at the Olympic, and, finally, at the Haymarket. The chief incident of the time was his benefit at the Olympic, the first benefit which he ever took in London, and the last until that which marked the close of his career was organised by his friends. There was a great rush for places, and every seat in the house was occupied. After the performance, Mr. Compton was entertained at a merry supper by a small party of friends, of whom I was privileged to be one; and we all expressed the hope that the festival at which we were assisting might be made one of regular recurrence. His own modesty prevented the realisation of our wish, and he remained content with such crumbs of acting as the nature of his engagement at the Haymarket threw in his way.

At the end of 1851, his brother Stephen was killed by an accident, and I made arrangements to

succeed to the vacant practice at Leytonstone. I remained there for rather more than two years, and the calls of my profession rendered me unable to visit London otherwise than occasionally, so that, although my friendship for Mr. and Mrs. Compton remained undiminished, I saw them only at comparatively long intervals. The agreement under which I took the practice was not a well-considered one, and, in the course of time, difficulties arose with regard to it, and it became necessary that I should leave. In the spring of 1854 I bought a practice at Putney, and, soon afterwards, abandoned this in order to go to the Crimea as an army surgeon. On my return to England, after an absence of nearly two years, Mr. Compton chanced not to be in town ; and I went into country practice in Nottinghamshire without having seen him. The life of a country doctor affords little opportunity for making holiday; and although I left Nottingham for Stroud in 1862, I was scarcely ever in London, and I did not see Mr. Compton again until 1870, by which time I had become settled there. The lapse of so many years had necessarily broken the ties of old associations; and it was a matter of much self-reproach to me that I had permitted the formation of a gap over which it was so difficult to throw a bridge.

It was only when my valued friend was visited by disabling sickness that it became possible for us to forget the intervening period, and to gather up the threads of old intercourse very much as if they had not been severed. That this was actually done will be to me, throughout the remainder of my own life, a source of unceasing pleasure and consolation.

Recurring to the recollections of the three years of my studentship, I once received a note from Mr. Compton, asking me to come to his house before the opening of the theatre, or, if I could not manage this, to come to his dressing-room at the Olympic before a stated hour. The last was all I could do; and I found him ready for the first night of a new piece, in which he had to play one of those parts, in its own nature subordinate, which his genius always made important. A cold had settled upon his throat, and had made him suddenly hoarse, and he sent for me to ask whether he would be likely to endanger the recovery of his voice by playing in his then condition. I thought not, and went round to the auditorium to witness the performance. On his first appearance he was, as usual, warmly received by an audience to whom his acting was familiar; but when he spoke the applause was redoubled. The hoarseness, which was

his temporary misfortune, was accepted as a fresh evidence of his mimetic skill; and during the run of the piece he never attempted to speak his part in it with a natural voice, but always in that which he had been constrained at first to adopt. Other theatrical reminiscences of him crowd upon the mind, but they will have a more appropriate place in the recollections of others than in mine. To me he was always the loved and trusted friend, and only secondarily the finished actor.

The circumstances of my early years had brought me into close relation with many of Mr. Compton's kindred—with his father and mother, with some of his brothers and sisters, and with his nephews and nieces in more than one family. It follows that my personal knowledge of him was largely increased by hearsay, and that I was familiar with anecdotes of him at every period of his life, from his early childhood to his marriage; after which the kindness which he had before extended to me ripened into a closer friendship than can often exist where there is such a difference of age. This friendship, after having been interrupted for nearly twenty years, was revived towards the close of his life; and the enthusiasm of my early belief in him was brought to the test of

reconsideration by a more matured judgment. In the intervening time I had seen and travelled much, and had enjoyed my full share of those opportunities for the close scrutiny of human nature which fall especially to the lot of medical practitioners. I had last seen him in the zenith of his powers, I found him suffering grievously from mortal sickness. It is seldom, indeed, that the most cherished beliefs of youth can be brought to such a test without undergoing some degree of modification; but my later intercourse with Mr. Compton only confirmed and strengthened the high estimation in which I had previously held him. Throughout his long and chequered career he had, in the words of the apostle, "kept himself unspotted from the world." He went to his rest with his charity as large, his sympathies as far-reaching, his sense of rectitude as pellucid, his conscience as unstained as if he had been still a boy. He was the most manly man, the warmest and truest friend, the most noble-hearted and most chivalrous gentleman whom it has ever been my lot to know, or in any authentic way to hear of, since my experience of life began. The virtues which he displayed in a private station would, if he had occupied a more exalted one, have given his name a place in history

with those of Thomas More and Philip Sydney; and, even as it is, they cast upon those who witnessed them a burden of responsibility that their example shall not be wholly thrown away. It might well be an aim in life to prove oneself not to have been unworthy of his friendship.

R. BRUDENELL CARTER.

MY acquaintance with Mr. Compton must have originated—though I have no recollection of the precise date or occasion—through our introduction of his old and close friend (and mine), Mark Lemon, somewhere between 1845 and 1848; but my more intimate personal relations with him began in 1850, during his engagement at the New Strand, under the management of the late William Farren. The New Strand had even then made a reputation for broad fun and burlesque, under the management of an excellent low comedian, Mitchell, now forgotten on this side of the Atlantic, but a forerunner of Robson in the more purely comic vein of that highly and variously endowed actor. Robson's Jem Baggs, in "The Wandering Minstrel," was written for Mitchell. Thanks to the burlesque material provided for Mitchell by Messrs. Gilbert A'Beckett and Henry Mayhew, the Strand Theatre had, in Mitchell's hands, obtained a

vogue which, stuffy and inconvenient little den as it was, and is, it had maintained under the management of W. J. Hammond. In the second year of Mr. Farren's management, Mr. Compton was established as his first low comedian. Early in 1842 I had suggested to Mr. Farren that something might be done in the burlesque form, which should combine fun and spectacle with more of meaning or purpose than had generally been clothed in motley. A ready hearing from the accomplished and cultivated manager produced my first work at the New Strand, "Diogenes and his Lantern; or, A Hue and Cry after Honesty"—a satiric hit at the quackeries, political and trading, of the time—at Christmas, 1849. I do not remember if Mr. Compton was then a member of Mr. Farren's company, which was an excellent one, including (besides the lessee, whose fine characterisation and delicacy, both of conception and execution, still told, in spite of the growing indistinctness of his elocution, and the gradual decay of physical power), Mrs. Glover, Mr. and Mrs. Leigh Murray, Mrs. Stirling, Messrs. Henry and William Farren, jun., and other good actors. Pieces were well cast for this little theatre, thoroughly rehearsed, well dressed, well mounted, and well acted, in defiance of the smallest and shallowest

stage on which a metropolitan company ever strutted and fretted. Mr. Compton was not included in the cast of "Diogenes." I infer that it was not till the year after that he joined the new Strand company, when I had the pleasure of writing my first part for him—that of Flatz, the servant of Paracelsus, in a "Whitsun Morality," "The Philosopher's Stone." Not many living London playgoers probably have any recollection of the play or the part. The scene was in Basle; the cast included Leigh Murray as Paracelsus, Miss Stirling as Veilchen (a flower-girl), and Miss Marshall as a saucy serving-wench.

I am glad to recall the pleasure—a very vivid one to a young author—at the quiet intelligence with which Compton appreciated the point and purpose, not only of all he had to say and sing, but the scenes in which he was a prominent figure, and of the whole piece. I particularly remember the effect with which, in the scene of "Consultation gratis," he prescribed, in the gown and character of his master, for the ailments of Paracelsus's non-paying patients; the big and bloated pomposity with which, after Paracelsus's discovery of the philosopher's stone, Flatz proclaimed to the crowd the advent of the Millennium, "When you'll each have a thousand pounds a year!" and the

contrasted lugubriousness of collapse with which, six months after, when everybody in Basle had had money at command without working for it, and universal pauperisation has ensued, Flatz submitted, in limp wretchedness and ragged disarray, to the buffets of the mob.

In the Christmas of 1850 we produced a third and less didactic *féerie*, founded on one of the fairy tales of the Countess D'Aulrois, "Prince Dorus; or, The Romance of the Rose." In this Mr. Compton played Cogne Creche, and grand chamberlain and gold stick-in-waiting—for something better—the courtly attendant on Prince Dorus in his quest of the Princess Mignonette (pretty Miss Louisa Howard), through the regions of earth, water, and fire, till the rose is reduced to normal dimensions, and the princess is won. Who but the author of this forgotten absurdity now remembers how much he owed the actor, who gave point to his lines and effect to his situations? I am glad to acknowledge this among my many debts of this kind due to Mr. Compton; and I have no pleasanter reminiscences of that inconvenient little theatre—where you dived into the scene-painter's room as into a cellar, and could almost span the breadth from the float to the back-flat with extended

arms, and where yet, strange to say, *féerie* and spectacular burlesque, which trusts so much to scenery, dresses, and decorations, has always found a favourite home—than those connected with his grave, quiet smile and cordial greeting as we met at the rehearsals, at which he was so punctual and attentive, or of the dry humour and unfailing point with which, at night, he would give out my lines, so that no shade of my meaning should be lost, and many effects of his own obtained, which the writer of the lines never dreamed of; for he was eminently one of those actors who develop the sketch and animate the dry bones committed to them by the dramatist.

Most of the parts I wrote for Mr. Compton at the Strand were in rhyme; only one, I think, was in prose-drama. The success of "The Vicar of Wakefield,"* in March, 1850—the last original part but one played by him, and the last played by her—suggested to me the notion of using the well-marked and well-known members of the "Spectator's Club" as the personages of a play. "Sir Roger de Coverley" was produced in April, 1851. Mr. Farren, of course, was the Sir Roger; his son Henry, Will Honeycombe;

* The last play in which Mr. Farren and Mrs. Glover appeared together, as the Vicar and Dame Primrose.

W. Farren, Captain Gentry; Leigh Murray, Reuben Cooper, a gipsy; Mrs. Murray, Mahala Stanley, a Romany girl; Lady Bellasis, the coquettish widow of Sir Roger's adoration, Mrs. Stirling. Mr. Compton was the Will Whimble. He gave full effect to the whimsicality of that most knightly and desultory Jack-of-all-trades.*

"Sir Roger de Coverley" was the last original part played by Mr. Farren. I still seem to see him as he footed it with the fair widow in the country dance that bears his name which closed the piece.

Mr. Compton's excellent impersonation of Will Whimble is a not less pleasant reminiscence. Among his qualifications for such parts, not the least was the literary culture which enabled him to throw into his personations a refined and subtle feeling of the time and style derived from knowledge of the book, attained otherwise than through the second-hand version—too

* Apart from Mr. Compton's excellent performance, there is one thing worth remembering about the play. I believe it is the only play on the stage in which gipsies are introduced, talking their own tongue, and with ways and manners studied from the life. I was, in fact, an *aficionado* of the "dark people" from my college days, and had studied their habits, and noted, and in some degree mastered, their tongue, before Barrow published "Lavengro," or Dr. Bath Smart, Professor Palmer, or Mr. Leland had compiled glossaries and grammars of the English "Romany Rokkerpen."

often a travestie—of the theatre. He was, in fact, a scholarly as well as a thoroughly conscientious and well-trained actor. None but a dramatic author who loves books can feel what an enhanced pleasure this added to intercourse with him in, as well as out of, the theatre.

Our close and pleasant relations with Mr. Compton at the Strand were followed by a break. He was not engaged at the theatres for which I was working between 1851 and 1857.

Dramatic author has not often been more indebted to actor than I to Compton, for his performance of the first part I wrote for him at the Haymarket—Blenkinsop, the solemn and self-important "gentleman's gentleman," in "The Unequal Match," produced in Nov. 1857, for the London *début* of Miss Amy Sedgwick. The character, I should think, is one with which Compton's name will remain more distinctly and particularly identified than it is with any of those subsequently filled by him in pieces of mine produced at the same theatre. Certainly no actor then or since on the stage could have more completely "created" a part than Compton created Blenkinsop. The sententiousness, the grave self-importance, the solemnity of voice, look, and deportment, fell peculiarly within the range of the actor's

most telling qualities, and made of Blenkinsop something as distinct and lifelike as it was possible to make a character so essentially artificial. I well remember with what careful pains he elaborated the part, point by point, till each rehearsal brought him nearer and nearer to the complete embodiment presented on the first night to the delighted audience. To him I must always attribute a large share in the success of the play during its first long run, and he never lost sight of the limits that separate comedy—even broad low comedy — from farce. There was no gagging, no grimace, no over-forcing of points. All was consistent, thoroughly wrought out, with an observance of the rules of good taste and reserve which the English low comedian is so constantly tempted to overstep, but within which this actor was restrained not more by the thoroughness of his early training in good country theatres than by his native sense of propriety and measure. Another quality of his, eminently shown in this character, was the power of giving point and significance to short speeches and even single words. In this, too, the completeness of his training was very apparent, as well as the effect of his thorough study and leisurely elaboration of all he took in hand.

In successive years of the same long-continued engagement, during which Compton became as completely a Haymarket "institution" as Mr. Buckstone himself, he played with excellent effect for me in "The Contested Election," Honeybun, the ill-starred ex-grocer, trapped by an ambitious wife and a scheming electioneering agent into becoming a candidate for Parliament; in "The Overland Route," Sir Solomon Frazer, the pompous ex-colonial official, the loss of whose artificial teeth is felt to be such a blessing by his fellow-passengers in the *Simoon*, because it forces him to keep his mouth shut, and so checks the flow of his platitudes; and Seidell, the smooth-tongued sayer of disagreeable things, and *colporteur* of mischievous gossip, in "The Babes in the Wood;" the part of a flashy light comedian, assuming the airs of a lady-killer of quality, in a now-forgotten comedy, "A Duke in Difficulties;" and, lastly, the self-sufficient and stolid policeman in "Mary Warner." In all these pieces Compton was one of my mainstays, on whom the more I depended the more reason I had to be thankful. Whoever was late at rehearsals, or inattentive and troublesome during their progress, ready to pooh-pooh the author's suggestions, or incapable of appreciating him, Compton was sure to be

found at his post—quiet, attentive, careful—and never failing to show more and more clearly, as the rehearsals progressed, what he meant to do with the part; never, like some actors, masking his play with the silly notion of taking author or brother-actors by surprise, still less "scamping" his work from laziness, or trusting to the inspiration and excitement of the first night for emphasis, effect, or action. Of all the actors I have had to do with, Compton was one of the most satisfactory and trustworthy to rehearse with. Of all the actors it may be said, so far as my experience goes, that their care and diligence at rehearsals, and the intelligent use made of the author's suggestions or counsel, is in exact proportion with their excellence. But Compton was a pre-eminent example of this, and he reaped his reward in the completeness and finish of his impersonations.

The last part I wrote for Compton was one of a Westmoreland village schoolmaster, employed as mathematical teacher to a Cambridge reading-party in the Lake district, in a drama entitled, "Handsome Is that Handsome Does," produced at the Prince's Theatre, Manchester, in 1870, after the conclusion of his long Haymarket engagement. The intention was to depict a sort of rustic Crichton, as great in

solving a problem as in holding his own at a wrestling-match, who finds a rival in one of his reading-party in his love of a pretty young Daleswoman, whom in the end he conquers by generosity, saving his life in a mountain-storm, and opening the eyes of the girl he loves to his essentially noble qualities, hidden under his uninviting outer man. Had Compton been called upon to play the part twenty years earlier, there was nothing in the part, I believe, to which he would not have done justice. As it was, I feel now that it was ill-judged to call upon a man at his age, and with the germs of the terrible ailment to which he at last succumbed already at work, to play a part of this description.

The wrestling-match and the storm-scene on the mountain overtaxed his physique, and the difference of age between him and his young rival was too palpable. Then the northern dialect was a serious obstacle to its success in London, where it was produced after its run at Manchester. In the great northern Cottonopolis, where the Lakes are a favourite recreation-ground, and the sport of wrestling has a large body of ardent votaries, the play went with enthusiasm, the wrestling scene in particular fairly enlisting the passionate sympathies of the audience on one side or the other. The pit, in fact, took

audible and visible part in the wrestling-match that was going on upon the scene. Compton, always a prime favourite in Manchester, did not fail to win their favour even in a part that put him to so severe and, in some respects, so unfair a trial. I should have known better than to expect him to do it. But with this part, as with all I wrote for him, he did his best, only his best was not so good as usual.

I have confined my observations to my actual experience of the actor, leaving to others the task of expatiating on his acknowledged merits as an actor of a certain class of parts in the Shakespearean and Elizabethan drama, in which he had no rival living, and is not likely soon to find a superior. His Shakespearean clowns were incomparably the most original and telling I have seen on the stage; and his Marall, in "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," held equal rank.

He was not a various or versatile actor, and never quite lost his own personality; perhaps this contributed to his popularity, as a strongly marked personality generally does, I believe, with an English public. They like to know any actor, would hardly thank him for a "make-up," or a personation, that left a moment's doubt as to his identity. His

measured and sententious utterance, his grave deportment, his *saccadé* movements, were his own, and part of the man, not arts of the actor. Knowing this, the author who had Compton in his eye for a part could hardly help "measuring him." He stood up sharp and distinct, and in the dramatist's mind's eye, as his model stands before the painter, not to copy, but to suggest the look and action of the ideal personage. All my associations with him are thus of kindliness and respect, and whatever might be his popularity as an actor with the public, it could not be exceeded by the estimation in which he was held as a man by all who came into intimate relations with him.

TOM TAYLOR.

Gore Lodge, Fulham,
Sept. 13th, 1861.

MY DEAR COMPTON,

I have thrown every difficulty in the way of your obtaining my autograph, because I wish to check so very absurd a pursuit while you are still a young man, lest it grow upon you as you get older, till you become a positive pest to your friends and a burthen to yourself. The man who in cold blood treasures up people's mere signatures, and pastes them in books,

must, in my opinion, end his days in Hanwell as a gibbering idiot. A characteristic autograph letter from an eminent and most interesting man (like myself) is of course a very different thing, and may be tolerated.

My father had a long letter from Sterne, in the most humble manner asking for fifty pounds as the price of the copyright of "Tristram Shandy." This was worth having; but, in your heart, do you think the signature of Monsieur Goffe, the "man-monkey," to be equally valuable? You dare not answer, and I honour you for it.

"I say, Goffe," said an actor to him, when he was acting in Liverpool, "give us your autograph."

"'Pon my soul I can't, old fellow," said he; "I must have a 'bus home, and s'help me Bob I've only got a fourpenny-piece in my pocket."

Isn't that anecdote worth more than his autograph?

My dear Compton,

Autographically yours,

(Sd.) C. J. MATHEWS.

33, Lansdown Road, Notting Hill, W.
2nd Feb. 1870.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have now before me the York bills of the play, March 13 and 14, 1837. On the first occasion

I see you play Killian and Theophilus Barter; on the second, Bartolo (the wife) and Mr. Gillman. I remember saying at the time that it could not be long before you would be in London. My words proved true, and I can assure you that your career has been ever since of particular interest to me; for, from what was then occurring, I felt that you, and the best among your well-endowed fellows, would be among the last of the trained and educated actors who would pass from York and similar schools to the old patent theatres. You are the only one left who, coming from such schools, has ripened into a great master of his art. It was a singular gratification to me to meet you at Frith's on Saturday, especially as you looked to me pretty well as young and as joyous as when I saw the York curtain descend before you, at the close of "The Happiest Day of my Life," in 1837; and as it has afforded me the opportunity of offering the accompanying token of my interest in the stage, your acceptance of which will give much pleasure to

Very truly yours,

(Sd.) JOHN DORAN.

Henry Compton, Esq.

THE END.

CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS, CRYSTAL PALACE PRESS.